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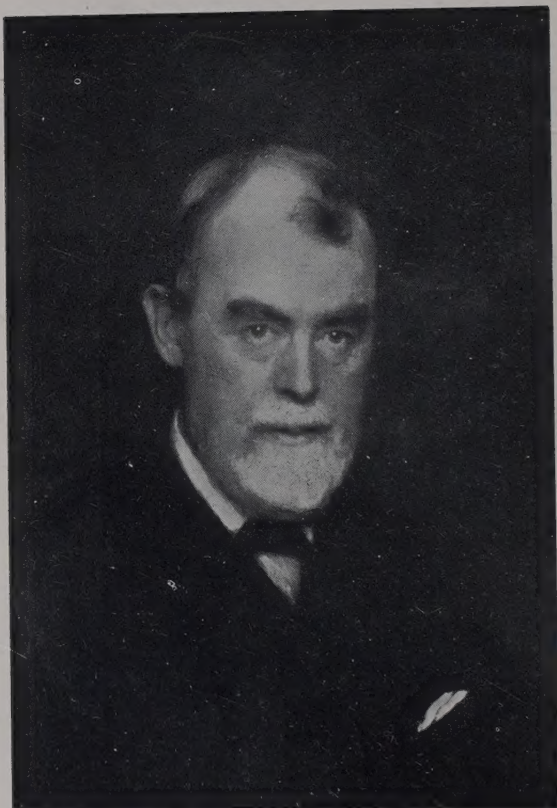
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THE
ROADMAKER
SERIES

SAMUEL BUTLER

(1835-1902)

By
C. E. M. JOAD



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

SAMUEL BUTLER was born at the Rectory, Langar, near Bingham, Nottinghamshire, in December, 1835. His early years were passed at Langar Rectory. In January, 1846, he was sent to school at Allesley, near Coventry, and in 1848 proceeded to Shrewsbury Public School, of which the Rev. B. H. Kennedy was then headmaster. Many of the scenes of his school life at Shrewsbury are reproduced in *The Way of All Flesh*, and there is good ground for believing that Dr. Skinner, of Roughborough, is closely modelled upon the Rev. B. H. Kennedy. In 1854 Butler went into residence at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he remained for four years. His career at Cambridge showed that he possessed ability of a high order, although he displayed no special aptitude in any particular direction. He was placed twelfth in the Classical Tripos in his last year, a performance which, considering that he had originally intended to take the Mathematical Tripos, was considered highly creditable. He coxed his college boat at Cambridge, contributed to the College magazine called *The Eagle*, and seems to have been generally popular with his fellow undergraduates.

Butler experienced some difficulty in the matter of the choice of a career. It was always

understood that he was to be ordained on leaving Cambridge, but he was troubled with doubts in regard to the efficacy of infant baptism, and declined ordination. He himself wished to be an artist, but his parents considered painting likely to be an unremunerative pursuit, and he ultimately emigrated to New Zealand in 1859, with the intention of becoming a sheep farmer, and took a sheep run called Mesopotamia, situated in the upper waters of the River Rangitata. Butler drew considerably upon his New Zealand experiences for the topographical details in *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited*. The country described in the early part of *Erewhon*, and more especially the high range of mountains which Higgs crosses, bears a strong resemblance to that part of New Zealand in which Butler's run was situated, while the characteristics of the horse "Doctor" in *Erewhon Revisited* are taken directly from those of Butler's own horse, not even the name of "Doctor" being changed. There is a place in New Zealand called Erewhon after Butler's book. Butler seems to have enjoyed his life in New Zealand, and, in spite of the anxieties of sheep farming, found plenty of time to read, write, and play the piano. He read Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which was published in 1859, became one of his most ardent admirers, and wrote a Philosophical Dialogue, which appeared in the New Zealand "Press" in 1862, expounding Darwin's views. In June, 1863, the "Press" published a letter by Butler signed "Cellarius," and headed *Darwin among the Machines*, which contained the

leading ideas of the famous chapters entitled "The Book of the Machines" in *Erewhon*. In 1863 Butler's parents published, under the title of *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, an account of Butler's life in New Zealand, compiled from his letters home and extracts from his journal.

In 1864 Butler, who had prospered exceedingly with the sheep, sold his run and returned to England. He had doubled the capital of £4,000 with which he had started, and, with £8,000 profitably invested, might consider himself sufficiently well circumstanced. On arriving in England, he took up his abode at 15, Clifford's Inn, on the second floor, his quarters consisting of three rooms and a pantry. He liked them so well that he remained in them continuously until his death thirty-eight years afterwards.

Butler's wish was to become famous as a painter, and he seems at this time to have entertained few, if any, literary ambitions. He attended art classes in Bloomsbury and South Kensington, and was also a student at Heatherley's famous School of Art, where he met Miss Eliza Mary Anne Savage and the painter Charles Gogin. With Miss Savage, who remained his close friend until her death, Butler maintained a lengthy and highly amusing correspondence. Miss Savage was possessed of wit little, if at all, inferior to Butler's, and most of his literary work was undertaken under the stimulus of her encouragement. Gogin painted the portrait of Butler which is now in the National Gallery.

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Between 1868 and 1876 Butler was chiefly engaged in painting, a dozen of his pictures being hung in the Academy. About this time, however, his early interest in Darwin revived; and as a result he wrote his first considerable work, entitled *Erewhon*, compiled largely from the material contained in *Darwin among the Machines*, and *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*. *Erewhon* was refused by several publishers (Meredith refused it for Chapman and Hall on the ground that it appeared to be a philosophical work), and Butler ultimately published it anonymously in 1872 through Messrs. Trubner at his own expense. *Erewhon* met with considerable success and ran into several editions, but it is to be inferred that this success was chiefly due to its anonymity, since, when Butler published a later edition under his own name, the sales are said to have dropped from fifty copies to three copies per week.

About this time also (1873) Butler wrote *The Fair Haven*, an ironical defence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and began *The Way of All Flesh*, which he continued at intervals until Miss Savage's death in 1885, when he abandoned it. *The Way of All Flesh* was not published until 1903, a year after Butler's death.

In 1876, owing to injudicious investments, Butler lost most of his money, and for the next ten years, until the death of his father in 1886, his financial position was one of considerable difficulty. Whether he hoped to relieve the situation by making money out of his writing it

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is impossible to say—if he did have any hopes of this kind they were grievously disappointed—but, whatever the reason, the next ten years were those of Butler's greatest literary activity. In 1877 he published his most considerable book on evolution, *Life and Habit*, and in 1879 followed it up with *Evolution Old and New*. In 1880 *Unconscious Memory* appeared; it deals largely with the views of Professor Hering on "Memory as a Universal Function of Organised Matter," to which Butler was introduced by Mr. Francis Darwin in 1877. Butler published his last book on evolution, *Luck or Cunning*, in 1887.

During the next ten years his chief literary productions were a couple of books entitled *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont* and *Ex Voto*, the fruits of his travels in Northern Italy, which consist chiefly of accounts of paintings and sculptures discovered by Butler in out-of-the-way shrines and chapels, and a work entitled *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, published in 1897, in which Butler seeks to show that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman. He also translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into English prose, and composed in collaboration with Mr. Festing Jones two oratorios in the Handelian manner named *Narcissus* and *Ulysses*.

Towards the end of his life Butler's interest revived in those questions which had chiefly occupied his earlier years, namely, the nature and purpose of the process called evolution, and the origin of the belief in miracles, with particular reference to the Resurrection, and he composed a

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sequel to *Erewhon* entitled *Erewhon Revisited*, published in 1901, which is devoted very largely to an exposition of Butler's views on these topics.

Throughout the whole of the period spent in the composition of these works, that is to say from 1864 until his death in 1902, Butler's life was, with the exception of occasional visits to Italy, entirely devoid of incident. He lived by rule and worked by time-table; his life was as austere as a hermit's and almost as solitary, and its even tenor was never disturbed. The following extract from Mr. Festing Jones' sketch of the life of Samuel Butler will serve to indicate how Butler's days were passed.

“ In December, 1886, Butler's father died, and his financial difficulties ceased. He engaged Alfred Emery Cathie as clerk, but made no other change, except that he bought a pair of new hair brushes and a larger wash-hand basin. Any change in his mode of life was an event. When in London he got up at 6.30 in the summer and 7.30 in the winter, went into his sitting-room, lighted a fire, put the kettle on and returned to bed. In half an hour he got up again, fetched the kettle of hot water, emptied it into the cold water that was already in his bath, refilled the kettle and put it back on the fire. After dressing, he came into his sitting-room, made tea and cooked, in his Dutch oven, something he had bought the day before. His laundress was an elderly woman, and he could not trouble her to come to his rooms so early in the morning; on the other hand he could not stay in bed until he

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thought it right for her to go out ; so it ended in his doing a great deal for himself. He then got his breakfast and read *The Times*. At 9.30 Alfred came, with whom he discussed anything requiring attention, and soon afterwards his laundress arrived. Then he started to walk to the British Museum, where he arrived about 10.30, every alternate morning calling at the butcher's in Fetter Lane to order his meat. In the reading-room at the Museum he sat at Block B (' B for Butler '), and spent an hour 'posting his notes'—that is, reconsidering, rewriting, amplifying, shortening, and indexing the contents of the little note-book he always carried in his pocket. After the notes he went on till 1.30 with whatever book he happened to be writing.

"On three days of the week he dined in a restaurant on his way home, and on the other days he dined in his chambers where his laundress had cooked his dinner. At two o'clock Alfred returned (having been home to dinner with his wife and children) and got tea ready for him. He then wrote letters and attended to his accounts till 3.45, when he smoked his first cigarette. He used to smoke a great deal, but, believing it to be bad for him, took to cigarettes instead of pipes, and gradually smoked less and less, making it a rule not to begin till some particular hour, and pushing this hour later and later in the day, till it settled itself at 3.45. There was no water laid on in his rooms, and every day he fetched one can full from the tap in the court, Alfred fetching the rest. When anyone expostulated with him

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about cooking his own breakfast and fetching his own water, he replied that it was good for him to have a change of occupation. This was partly the fact, but the real reason, which he could not tell everyone, was that he shrank from inconveniencing anybody; he always paid more than was necessary when anything was done for him, and was not happy unless he did some of the work himself.

“At 5.30 he got his evening meal, he called it his tea, and it was little more than a facsimile of breakfast. Alfred left in time to post the letters before six. Butler then wrote music till about eight, when he came to see me in Staple Inn, returning to Clifford’s Inn by about ten. After a light supper, latterly not more than a piece of toast and a glass of milk, he played one game of his own particular kind of Patience, prepared his breakfast things and fire ready for the morning, smoked his seventh and last cigarette, and went to bed at eleven o’clock.”

Butler’s one relaxation was travelling, and the country in which he delighted to travel was Italy. His first visit to Italy took place in the company of his parents when he was only eight years old, and from that time onwards his interest in the scenery, history and people of Italy formed, as it were, a permanent background to his other pursuits. After his return to England in 1864, he visited Italy always once, and often twice, a year, sketched its towns, villages, landscapes and statues, made friends with the peasants, and came in time to regard the district of the Italian lakes

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as a sort of second home. He thought the walk over the pass of Colma from Orta to Varallo the finest in the world. Butler was very popular with the Italians; the people of Varallo gave him a civic dinner on their Sacred Mount of Varallo—the chapels on the Sacred Mount of Varallo form the subject of his book *Ex Voto*—and on his death the people of Calatafimi, in Sicily, named a street after him.

The music of Handel was Butler's other great passion, and it may be surmised that he cared far more for Italy and for Handel than he did for his literary reputation, his work on evolution, his controversy with Darwin, or his exposure of English domestic interiors.

In the spring of 1902 Butler fell ill during a visit to Sicily; he was taken to a nursing home in St. John's Wood and died a month later on June 18th, 1902.

CHAPTER ONE

Creative Evolution

INTRODUCTION

THE modern world hears much of Samuel Butler the iconoclast. It is indeed upon his iconoclasm that his reputation mainly rests. It was Samuel Butler who first laughed at the gods of Victorian England; it was Samuel Butler who thawed that first tiny hole in the icy crust of Victorian morality, through which were soon to pour the floods of Shavian invective; it was Samuel Butler who first took the portentous lay figure of Victorian complacency by the throat and shook it until the stuffing came out. Butler, then, was a satirist, a mocker, a jester, not savage like Swift, but irreverent like a schoolboy who laughs his masters out of countenance. He pricked the bubbles, the reputations popped, and the mischievous laughter of the schoolboy was heard in the background.

In this capacity Butler is well enough known to-day. Complete editions of his works, cheap editions of his works, biographies and commentaries have carried his name into the remotest suburbs, where, since the modern disrespect for anything over thirty years old has preceded him,

he is welcomed with open arms, as one who knows all about one's parents, and can take them down with an effectiveness that even the advantages conferred by one's own inside information will never enable one to equal. Daughters who are expected to waste their virgin lives in attendance upon sick and elderly relations adopt an Erewhonian view of illness, and sons anxious to establish their claim to a latchkey obtain ammunition from *The Way of All Flesh*.

All this, no doubt, is as it should be; each generation takes the gods of its grandfathers from the shelf upon which its fathers have placed them, and Butler, who in many respects belongs to the eighteenth rather than to the nineteenth century, is welcomed by the twentieth for the same reasons as those which led his contemporaries to ignore him. But this suburban popularity has one unfortunate result. Butler, who undeniably stood for all the things that the revolting sons and daughters think he did, stood for something else as well, and that something else was, at any rate for Butler, of much more importance than all his irreverences and iconoclasm put together. The mischievous destructiveness for which Butler is so famous to-day was, in fact, a comparatively late and entirely incidental development of his genius, and it was developed as the crab develops its shell, for purposes of defence rather than of offence. It was a kind of protective colouring, designed to shelter a sensitive organism from the ill-usage of the world. To put the point in another way,

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Butler refused to take the Victorian pundits seriously because they refused to take him seriously ; he only made fun of his world because it made fun of him.

Samuel Butler, says Norman Douglas, spent his intellectual fortune in buying penny crackers to place beneath the pedestals of the great, a form of expenditure which the author of *South Wind* appears to regret. Possibly he did, but only when the great had refused his fortune. And Butler's fortune was nothing more nor less than an original contribution to the theory of Creative Evolution on the biological side, the inspired audacity of which places him second to none, not even to Darwin himself, among the pioneers of the nineteenth century. Twentieth century developments in the philosophy of evolution have borne out and justified Butler no less remarkably than twentieth century developments of morality, or rather, of the lack of it, and it is high time to-day, when we have poked enough fun at our parents to reduce them to abject humility, when the game of pelting the Victorian Aunt Sally is beginning to pall, and when Butler's irreverences have ceased to shock because they are taken for granted, that attention should be paid to the more constructive side of his work.

Butler wrote four books on the theory of Evolution : *Life and Habit* (1878), *Evolution Old and New* (1879), *Unconscious Memory* (1880), and *Luck or Cunning* (1887), besides a number of articles of which the three most important are published under the title, *The Deadlock in*

Darwinism; and he himself thought much more of these works than of all his other writings put together. Many of the ideas suggested in *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh* are worked out fully in his biological writings, and some account of them and of the attitude to life which they implied is an indispensable preliminary to a consideration of Butler's work as a whole. I make no apology, then, for starting with the biology, nor, in a series of this character, for bestowing considerably more space upon it than is customary in a treatment of Butler's work.

I propose in this and the succeeding chapter to describe, first, Butler's controversy with Darwin and his followers; secondly, the metaphysical views with regard to the nature of the Universe as a whole which Butler's part in the controversy was designed to support; and thirdly, the subsequent developments in the theory of Creative Evolution of which Butler may in a very real sense be regarded as a precursor.

THE ISSUE BETWEEN BUTLER AND THE
DARWINIANS

The question in which Butler was chiefly interested was this, "What is *the cause* of those changes in species which we call evolution?" The fact of evolution, that is to say of the changes and developments that have occurred in all forms of organic life, had been established beyond possibility of doubt by Charles Darwin. Even the Church had bowed before the weight of evidence and endeavoured to soften the blow to

man's conceit administered by Darwin's proof that his earliest ancestor was not an angel but an amœba, by representing the process which began with the amœba and ended with man as a progress. It is to be hoped that the amœba shares this view of the matter.

In order, however, that such a process as evolution might be able to occur at all, there must have been changes or variations in species. If there were no such changes, then each generation would be an exact replica of the preceding one, and the amœba and his contemporaries would still be the sole forms of life on the planet. In order to account for evolution, then, we must assume variations in species. How were these variations caused? Over the answer to this apparently simple question volumes of controversy have been written, the world of biologists has been separated into hostile camps, and numberless reputations have been made and lost. Yet an agreed answer is still lacking.

DARWIN'S AND LAMARCK'S VIEWS CONTRASTED

When Butler took the field, there were two main theories as to the origin of variations. The leading theory was that of Charles Darwin (1859). He ascribed the variations to chance. Variations in species fortuitously occurred. Some of them were suited to their environment; others were not. Those which were suited survived and produced offspring; those which were not were eliminated.

The other theory, which was earlier than

Darwin's by some forty odd years, was that of the French naturalist, Lamarck. Lamarck ascribed the chief factor in the causation of variations to the influence of environment. Changes of environment necessitated changes in living organisms, who in order to adapt themselves to their changed environment were compelled to change with it. Those who were successful in adapting themselves to the changes survived and transmitted the adaptation in virtue of which they had survived to their descendants; those who were not were eliminated. These adaptations on the part of the organisms were envisaged by Lamarck in terms of the growth of new organs and the lapsing of old ones. Changes in environment led to new wants, new wants to new habits, and new habits to new organs formed to minister to the habits.

A concrete illustration will serve to exemplify the difference between the two theories. We will take one which has become historically famous through the part it has played in biological controversy. "Why," it was asked, "did the giraffe grow his long neck?"

According to Darwin's theory, as expounded by the most prominent of the neo-Darwinians, Mr. Russel Wallace, giraffes with long necks were born by chance, much as children with warts are born by chance. These naturally had an advantage in the struggle for food and could nibble at leaves which were out of reach of their companions. As Wallace puts it, they "at once secured a fresh range of pastures over the same ground as their shorter-necked companions, and on the first

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scarcity of food were thereby enabled to outlive them." That is to say, in the struggle for existence the fittest survived, but it should be noticed that they were the fittest by chance and were not made so by design. There is no suggestion, however, that they handed on their long-necked proclivities to their offspring.

According to Lamarck the giraffes at a certain stage of their history, finding that all the leaves on the lower branches of the available trees had been eaten off, were under the necessity of either growing longer necks in order to reach higher leaves, or of perishing of hunger. Those who successfully adapted themselves to the changed conditions and grew the longer necks survived and transmitted the characteristic of long necks, in virtue of which they had survived, to their offspring. Once again in the struggle for existence the fittest survived, but they were the fittest not by chance but through success in adapting themselves.

At first sight the difference between Lamarck's theory and Darwin's is not very striking; indeed the points which they have in common appear to be more numerous than those in which they are at variance. The seeds of important differences are, however, contained in these comparatively simple statements, and before we come to Butler it will be as well to notice one or two of the most striking, besides emphasising the one characteristic which both of them have in common.

(1) We will take the common characteristic

first. Neither theory postulates the intervention of mind at any stage in attempting to account for the fact of evolution. Darwin attributes variations to chance, Lamarck to the action of environment. No suggestion of purpose or design occurs in either theory.

It is true that Lamarck's theory lends itself much more easily to the interposition of mind acting purposively than does Darwin's, and it is also true that, as we shall shortly see, many of Lamarck's followers did import mind into his theory in order to explain the occurrence of variations. But it is, nevertheless, a fact that in its initial statement Lamarck's theory can and does dispense both with mind and with purpose. Even if we state it, as it often is stated, as purposively as possible by asserting that "creatures grow new organs because they want to," we must still say that their new wants are implanted in them by changes in their environment. They are, therefore, automatic responses to those changes, and as such are ultimately expressible in physiological terms.

(2) Coming to the differences, we may note that the adoption of Lamarck's view enables the biologist to predict variations in species, at any rate in theory, before they occur. It also furnishes an explanation of consistency and coherence in variation. Let us assume for the moment that Lamarck was right. Let us also assume that the Sahara, instead of being the driest, became suddenly the rainiest tract of country on the earth's surface. Then we should expect that

creatures previously living in the Sahara would gradually evolve the rudiments of umbrellas. If, on the other hand, Darwin was right, we should expect them, short of the occurrence of some totally unexpected fluke, to become extinct.

(3) Lamarck's view requires us to believe that acquired characteristics can be and are inherited. The long-necked giraffe has long-necked offspring; giraffes, therefore, have long necks because at some time or other their ancestors were successful in achieving adaptation. Darwin's view does not necessarily involve this belief.

As a matter of fact Darwin did hold, although not consistently, that acquired characteristics could be inherited, but he thought that such inheritance was a rare and comparatively unimportant occurrence, and that changes in species were normally due to the accumulation of series of small and purely fortuitous variations.

THE INHERITANCE OF ACQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Now it is precisely on this question of whether acquired characteristics could be and were inherited that Butler made his entrance into the world of biological controversy, and believing strongly that they both could be and were, he took the field violently and decisively on the side of Lamarck. I say "could be" inherited because although, as we have seen, Darwin himself admitted occasional inheritance, his followers the neo-Darwinians, led by Mr. Wallace, denied such inheritance altogether.

It is important in this realm of bitter and confused controversy to keep the position of the various disputants clear. Both Wallace and Darwin hedged considerably about acquired characteristics and the possibility of their inheritance, but Darwin hedged much more than his followers. All that Darwin maintained was that such inheritance was not the *main* cause of evolution. He declared that it would be "a serious error to suppose that *the greater number* of instincts have been acquired by habit in one generation and then transmitted by inheritance to succeeding generations." Mr. Wallace goes much further than this. "The hypothesis of Lamarck," he writes, "that progressive changes in species have been produced by the attempts of animals to increase the development of their own organs, and thus modify their structure and habits—has been repeatedly and easily refuted by all writers on the subject of varieties and species."

Taking Darwin's more moderate statement of the anti-Lamarckian case, we may sharply define the issue between Butler's view, or rather the view of Lamarck which Butler developed, and that of his opponents in Butler's own words as follows :

"The dispute turns not upon natural selection which is common to all writers on evolution, but upon the nature and causes of the variations that are supposed to be selected from and thus accumulated. Are these mainly attributable to the inherited effect of use and disuse, supple-

mented by occasional sports and happy accidents ? Or are they mainly due to sports and happy accidents supplemented by occasional inherited effects of use and disuse ? ”

Now Butler was by no means a strict Lamarckian ; his theories, indeed, went far beyond those of Lamarck in many directions. In particular, that aspect of his view upon which he laid most emphasis, his belief, namely, that evolution was purposive, that it involved the constant activity of some force or intelligence not explicable in purely materialistic terms, and that this intelligence, directed to some consciously or unconsciously apprehended end, expressed itself in all the multiplicity of organic life, owes little or nothing to Lamarck. To this more positive aspect of Butler's views we shall return in a moment.

For the present it is sufficient to point out that, unless it was possible to hold that any changes in a species occurring during a particular generation could be handed on to other generations with a fair prospect of success, then Butler's hypothesis fell to the ground. Evolution with a purpose is meaningless if the future remains unaffected by all that has been achieved in the past. Although, therefore, the metaphysical speculations of Butler bore but a remote resemblance to the purely biological theories of Lamarck, the doctrine of the transmissibility of acquired characteristics was essential to both. Hence Butler was a Lamarckian, not in the sense that he read Lamarck and became converted,

but that, having first formulated and expressed his own views in *Life and Habit*, he found that Lamarck's was the chief if not the only biological theory in the field which supported them, while Darwin's put them entirely out of court.

To the doctrine of the transmissibility of acquired characteristics there were two main objections: there was a lack of evidence, and there was the germ plasm theory of Weismann. The lack of evidence was unfortunate but not conclusive; Weismann's theory, if right, was absolutely conclusive. Let us then first consider Weismann's theory.

WEISMANN'S GERM CELL THEORY

This may roughly be stated in Butler's words as follows: "At every birth a part of the substance which proceeds from the parents and which goes to form the new embryo is not used up in forming the new animal, but remains apart to generate the germ cells . . . which the new animal itself will in due course issue." "The germ cells," says Professor Weismann, "are no longer looked upon as the product of the parents' body, at least as far as their essential part . . . is concerned. They are rather something which is to be placed in contrast with the *tout ensemble* of the cells which make up the parents' body."

It follows that the parent is to be regarded rather as the trustee of the germ plasm than as the true creator of the child. It also follows that nothing which happens to the other cells of the parent can possibly affect the germ cell which

goes to form the child. Hence any characteristic which the parent may acquire during his lifetime will not affect the germ cell, and will fail, therefore, to reappear in the child.

“Life,” as Bergson puts it, “is like a current passing from germ to germ, through the medium of a developed organism.”

Now it is, I think, sufficiently clear that if Weismann’s theory is right in all that it asserts, then it is a fact that acquired characteristics cannot be transmitted. If the germ cell is really something apart, screened from all the influences that affect the parent’s life, then Butler was wrong. But on the other hand, Butler had only to produce one authentic instance of the inheritance of an acquired characteristic, and his theory was saved. For what could happen once could happen often ; and once it was established beyond possibility of question that a characteristic acquired by the parent had reappeared in the offspring, then many doubtful cases which might or might not be cases of inheritance could be given the benefit of the doubt.

Butler’s method of attack was twofold. He produced instances which appeared to him to prove his theory ; and he was continually catching Darwin and Weismann hedging in such a way as implicitly to admit all that he required.

By the first method Butler made little headway. It was easy for his opponents either to discredit his instances, or to show that they did not prove what he thought they did. The following cases are given as typical of many. Professor Marcus

Hartog, who subsequently wrote a valuable introduction to Butler's *Unconscious Memory*, contributed to the scientific journal *Nature* an account of the case of A. B., moderately myopic and extremely astigmatic in the left eye; very myopic in the right. Result: the left eye gives such unsteady images that A. B. is compelled in childhood to mask it: acquires habit, therefore, when writing, of leaning his head on his left arm so as to blind the eye, or of resting left temple and eye on hand with elbow on table. At age of fifteen A. B.'s eyes are equalised by the use of suitable spectacles and the habit is lost. A. B.'s children have normal sight; yet both of them reproduce A. B.'s early habit of hiding the left eye when writing.

Butler embraced the astigmatic A. B. with acclamation and hurled him at his opponents. They were singularly unimpressed. "It is not unusual," wrote Professor Ray Lankester, "for children to rest the head on the left forearm or hand when writing, and I doubt whether much value can be ascribed to the case described by Professor Hartog." Professor Ray Lankester goes on to remark that an old friend of his who lost his right arm when at school had ever since written with his left hand, without, however, producing any effect on his children or grandchildren, who showed no disposition to left-handedness.

Another case to which Butler attached great importance was based upon the famous experiments of M. Brown Sequard. M. Sequard used to keep guinea pigs in whom it was his practice

to produce various kinds of diseases such as epilepsy, gangrene of the ears and morbid states of the skin and hair, by damaging or otherwise tampering with some vital part of the pig such as its spinal cord or sciatic nerve. M. Sequard then used to watch the offspring of the affected pigs to see whether they reproduced the diseases of their parents, and found that in a great many cases they did. He even caused his pigs to eat off their toes by rendering the toes anæsthetic and then triumphantly produced toeless pigs, or pigs lacking the normal allowance of toes, from the mutilated parents.

Darwin was much impressed by these experiments, and was constrained to admit that the effects of mutilations were sometimes inherited. Not so Weismann; after seriously questioning the suggestion that artificially induced mutilations can be considered to be acquired characteristics at all, he proceeds to attribute the bulk of M. Sequard's cases to infection and not to inheritance, and to discredit the rest by throwing doubt upon the conditions under which the experiments had been carried out and their results recorded. A similar fate attended all Butler's instances. A less serious man would have been less disappointed; but Butler was so terribly addicted to truth that he could never bring himself to understand how it was possible, in a sphere in which actual proof was out of the question, for men of science to twist even the most untoward evidence to suit their own preconceived theories.

He was compelled to fall back on his second line of attack, which was to show that his opponents had frequently been driven to admit the very thing for which he, Butler, was contending. Weismann was a particular offender in this respect. "I am also far from asserting," Weismann had said, "that the germ plasm which, as I hold, is transmitted as the basis of heredity from one generation to another, is absolutely unchangeable or totally uninfluenced by forces residing in the organism. I am also compelled to admit it as conceivable that organisms may exert a modifying influence upon the germ cells, and even that such a process is to a certain extent inevitable."

This gave Butler all he wanted. He literally leaped upon Weismann's admission. Weismann had indeed said that the effect of the organism on the germ cell must be very slight, but who wanted it to be anything more? Certainly not Butler. Provided that the possibility of even the slightest effect were admitted, he could rely upon time to do the rest. For a very small effect, when repeated and accumulated in countless successive generations, was enough to establish Butler's theory of habit as the result of the accumulation of acquired characteristics.

THE EFFECTS OF USE OR DISUSE

Butler had a similar controversy with Mr. Russel Wallace on the effect of use and disuse in evolution, and one which ended in precisely the same way. Butler, who was still in quest of

evidence for his "purposive" theory of evolution, wanted to show that you could develop an organ by using it, as a preliminary to his further theory that you could create it by wanting it. Since, moreover, it was the *cause* of variations in species as a whole that was in question, it was essential for him to show further that the modifications in an organ which had been developed by use could be handed down by parent to offspring, just as the modifications in a decaying organ which was tending to become atrophied by disuse could also be handed on.

The question at issue here, then, was that of the giraffe's neck. Did the young giraffe have a long neck because his parents had elongated theirs by using them, or was the length of neck in the offspring a mere accident? Mr. Wallace, under the influence of Weismann's germ cell theory, tended to deny the existence of any evidence showing it to be more than an accident. For some time Butler and Wallace indulged in the game of discrediting one another's instances, which Butler had already played with Weismann. On the whole the advantage rested with Wallace. Butler, although he made out a good presumptive case for his point of view, was unable to bring forward any instances that were conclusive, and as a consequence got little change out of Wallace. He consoled himself with the more than generous admission of Darwin. Darwin, as we have already seen, held that fortuitous variations "were the most important" cause of modifications, but had always recognised the influence of use and disuse.

In the latest edition of *The Origin of Species* (1888), however, Darwin went further than this. "It appears probable," he says, "that disuse has been the main agent in rendering organs rudimentary." This was more than enough for Butler. He pointed out with considerable force that, if use and disuse could do anything, they could do everything. And even if they did not do everything, and Butler certainly did not for a moment believe that they did, who could tell which of the modifications that undoubtedly happened were due to use and disuse and which to natural selection. "Why stop," says Butler, "where Mr. Darwin did?" If use and disuse "can do as much as Mr. Darwin himself said they did, why should they not do more?"

In any event it is absurd to say first, that natural selection is "the most important means of modification," and secondly, "it appears probable that disuse has been the main agent in rendering organs rudimentary." Yet this was precisely what Mr. Darwin had said, and Butler was quite right in demanding to know first, what "most important" meant, and secondly, why, if disuse could render organs rudimentary, use could not develop them.

So much, as Butler would say, for Darwin. As for Weismann, Butler had already detected him in the admission that "many phenomena only appear to be intelligible if we assume the hereditary transmission of such acquired characteristics as the changes we ascribe to the

use and disuse of particular organs," and this left only the vexed question of the transmission of changes due to mutilation.

Here Butler, after citing familiar examples, including of course the famous Brown Sequard pigs, remarks that Weismann does not like these cases. Weismann, he says, calls them "doubtful," and proposes that for the moment they should be left aside. "He accordingly leaves them, but I have not yet found what other moment he considered auspicious for returning to them."

Butler was thus in a position to produce generous admissions on the subject of use and disuse, and suspicious hedging on the subject of the transmission of characteristics due to mutilation. He could further feel that he had demonstrated the inheritance of acquired characteristics at any rate to his own satisfaction, and he could feel this because, whereas all the evidence to the contrary did not affect him, only one piece of evidence in his favour was sufficient for the demolition of his opponents. Butler did not wish to maintain that racial modifications were always or even often inherited, nor was it necessary for him to show that variations often occurred. And if their occurrence was rare at any time, it would be still rarer when people were watching for them. "Nature," he said, "is usually conservative, and fixity of type, even under considerable change of conditions, is surely more important for the well-being of any species than an over-ready power of adaptation to, it may be, passing changes."

PROFESSOR HERING'S THEORY OF MEMORY

Thus far, Butler had carried on the work of Lamarck. He had shown, or had tried to show, that species change by adapting themselves to their environment and not merely fortuitously, and he had further shown that these changes could be passed on from generation to generation. His own theory went far beyond this, but before we are in a position to state it in its completed form, we must briefly refer to the other important factor that went to its making. This was Professor Hering's theory of Unconscious Memory.

In 1870, Dr. Ewald Hering, one of the most eminent physiologists of the day, gave an address entitled "Memory as a Universal Function of Organised Matter." The theory put forward by Hering was fundamentally a physiological one. He believed that the protoplasm of which living matter was composed was subject to vibrations, these vibrations being induced in it by the action of an external object. When the same vibrations are repeated from any cause or for any reason, the organism responds to them in the same way as it responded to the external object. This response is what we call the memory of the external object, and explains why in memory we are enabled to be brought, as it were, face to face with what is not present. The hypothesis has many points in common with the Theory of Engrams advanced by Semon in his recently published book *Mneme*; but while Semon's

theory confines itself to the psychology of memory, Hering's seeks to provide the process known as remembering with a physiological basis. Hering further held, and Butler agreed with him, that it was not necessary for the organism to be conscious of its own response to vibrations for what is called memory to occur. The memory might, in other words, be unconscious.

"We have a perfect right," says Hering, "to extend our conception of Memory to make it embrace the involuntary and also unconscious reproduction of sensations, ideas, perceptions and effects ; but we find, on having done so, that we have so far enlarged on her boundaries that she proves to be an ultimate and original power, the source and at the same time the unifying bond of our whole common life."

Now it is important to remember that Butler's theory of memory, almost identical as it was with that of Hering, was not originally inspired by it. He wrote *Life and Habit*, in which it first appeared, before he had read or even heard of Hering. Furthermore, although he shared Hering's conclusions, he did not necessarily accept Hering's physiological hypothesis about the vibrations of the protoplasm ; he saw that this hypothesis was at best an inspired guess, and that the psychological, and still more the metaphysical view, which chiefly concerned him, was in a very real sense independent of it. The service which Hering rendered to Butler was to reinforce on scientific grounds a theory which Butler had evolved by dint of pure speculation,

to give it a plausible physiological foundation (Butler was really strongly attracted to the vibrations, and although he is cautious about them in *Unconscious Memory*, he comes out strongly in their favour in *Luck or Cunning*), and in so doing to lay the basis for his whole philosophical theory.

So far Butler had been engaged in collecting two different kinds of material; the doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characteristics obtained from Lamarck, and the doctrine of Unconscious Memory at which he himself had guessed, but which Hering had, as it were, guaranteed; and his own original contribution to the philosophy of evolution was achieved by the simple process of putting them together.

The giraffe grows a long neck because its parents did, said Lamarck. But how does it come to know what its parents did? Because, says Butler, it remembers what it did when it was in the body of its parents, and it remembers this simply because it is its parents.

Let us begin with the last point first.

PERSONAL IDENTITY BETWEEN PARENTS
AND OFFSPRING

Butler maintained strongly that there is real personal identity between a man and his ancestors. This seems at first sight a surprising assertion. Butler extenuates it by pointing out, first, that we commonly claim identity between a baby of eight months and a man of eighty years, so that we say, "I am the person who at six months

old did this or that." Identity in this case certainly exists, yet it exists only in a sense and that a highly Pickwickian one, and it is in precisely this sense, whatever it may be, that Butler asserts that "the baby may just as fairly claim identity with its father and mother and say to its parents on being born, 'I was you only a few months ago.'" Secondly, "if the octogenarian may claim personal identity with the infant, the infant may certainly do so with the impregnate ovum from which it has developed"; and further, since every embryo passes through the fish stage, "the octogenarian will prove to have been a fish once in this his present life." This latter statement, of course, is not speculation but ascertained fact. And thirdly, what in any event is identity in any case? There is no such thing as identity: for there to be identity there must be two things to be identified; yet if they were really identical in every respect, occupying, that is to say, the same point in space and the same instant in time, they would not be two things but one thing. Now there is no sense in saying that one thing is identical with itself, or, if there is any sense in it, that is the only sense in which identity may be legitimately predicted. "In strictness," therefore, says Butler, "there is no such thing as strict identity between two things in any two consecutive seconds. In strictness they are identical and yet not identical," which is another way of saying that though in a sense I am not the same person as I was yesterday, in another sense I am, and it is in precisely this sense that I am the same

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person both as my ancestors and as my descendants. Now similarity of behaviour between parents and offspring is, of course, a much more pronounced and obvious fact than variation. There is continuity in evolution; the offspring of pigs behave on the whole much more like pigs than they do like monkeys, and reproduce the habits and characteristics of the pigs their parents. Why? Because they remember what they did when they were their parents. Inheritance of parental characteristics, which results in what we term racial habits, is in short, simply unconscious memory.

Having discovered that habit is unconscious memory, Butler proceeds to draw a number of highly plausible and ingenious deductions.

HABIT AS UNCONSCIOUS MEMORY

In the first place memory is usually latent unless it is awakened by associated actions. The return of memory "depends," in Butler's words, "on the return of the ideas associated with the particular thing that is remembered—we remember nothing but for the return of these. . . . So, if the development of an embryo is due to memory, we should suppose the memory of the impregnate ovum to revert not to yesterday when it was in the person of its parents, but to the last occasion on which it was an impregnate ovum. The return of the old environment and the presence of old associations would at once involve the recollection of the course that should next be taken."

It is only on this basis that we can explain the

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repetition of developmental stages by the offspring both before and after birth. Throughout this development it is simply repeating what it has done before as an offspring in the person of one or other parent. Memory persists until there comes a cessation of those associations which are required for its stimulation. When the memory ceases to be stimulated, the organism begins to decay through failure of any memory to support it and tell it what to do. We grow old, therefore, on Butler's hypothesis, through the failure of our organism to remember doing anything at all after a certain point when we were in the person of our parents ; there are, in short, no habits left to remember after a certain age. The view that we grow old because growing old is an acquired characteristic formed by habit, and dependent on the memory of past habits, subsequently became the foundation upon which Shaw reared the immense fabric of *Back to Methuselah*, a work which in the presuppositions from which it starts, in the conclusions drawn therefrom, and in the working out of the conclusions, closely follows Butler.

Secondly, the memory of things which we have done most repeatedly becomes unconscious, and our performance of these things is, therefore, also unconscious. We circulate our blood and grow our nails because we have become so used to doing it in the past that we can now go on doing it without knowing that we are doing anything at all. The things which we know best we are unconscious of knowing. We only know that we know things when we are not really sure of know-

ing them, and cannot, therefore, trust ourselves to do them without being aware of it. Butler puts this as follows :

“ We say of the chicken that it knows how to run about as soon as it is hatched . . . but had it no knowledge before it was hatched ? It knows how to make a great many things before it was hatched. It grew eyes and feathers and bones. Yet we say it knows nothing about all this. After it is born it grows more feathers, and makes its bones larger and develops a reproductive system. Again we say it knows nothing about all this. What, then, does it know ? Whatever it does not know so well as to be unconscious of knowing it. Knowledge dwells upon the surface of uncertainty. When we are very certain we do not know that we know. When we will very strongly we do not know that we will.”¹

The more often we do a thing, in fact, the less necessary does it become for us to attend to our doing of it. It is for this reason that we are most unconscious of and have least control of those functions within us, such as digestion and circulation, which were performed by our invertebrate ancestry, and which, therefore, we have in the persons of our parents performed ourselves most frequently.

The importance of this doctrine for those who desire to think of evolution as progressive is sufficiently obvious, and it is a matter for surprise that

¹ This doctrine has an important bearing on Butler's preference for ordinary common-sense people as compared with intellectuals. See Chapter III., pp. 108 and 109, and Chapter IV., pp. 144, 157, and 162.

Butler did not lay greater emphasis on it. Yet it was not until Shaw wrote the preface to *Back to Methuselah* that its bearing upon the question of progress was made explicit. Shaw there suggests that in consigning our earliest and most important habits to the realm of unconsciousness the purpose of the force that moves evolution forward is to set free our energy and attention for the acquirement of new ones. The more functions we perform unconsciously, and the more faculties we have, in consequence, time to acquire, the more advanced beings we become.

Critics of the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics have pointed out that the child of A., who knows how to ride a bicycle, is no more able to ride one without conscious effort and practice than the child of B., who has never seen a bicycle. Of course not, Butler would reply, because A.'s child in the person of his parents has not yet ridden a bicycle sufficiently often to have learned how to do it unconsciously. Therefore he has to relearn the habit in each of his lives, just as we may imagine that our remote ancestors were under the necessity of relearning afresh in each generation how to grow their hair and nails. But if A.'s descendants ride bicycles uninterruptedly for 10,000 years and B.'s do not, we may expect that ultimately there will be born of A.'s line of descendants an infant who possesses the habit of bicycle riding without having to learn it. He would have passed through the learning stage, just as he now passes through the fish stage, while he was still an embryo.

Now, it is clear that a being who possesses as part of his birthright the capacity to ride a bicycle is more advanced than one who does not, apart altogether from the fact that he possesses an increased power to make fresh advances, in virtue of his dispensation from the expenditure of time and energy which are now spent on learning the bicycle. This formula for progress in evolution, which is only hinted at by Butler, is fully worked out by Shaw.

STATEMENT OF BUTLER'S POSITION

We are now in a position to enumerate the four main heads of Butler's position.

They are: (1) The oneness of personality between parents and offspring.

(2) Memory on the part of the offspring of what it did in the person of its forefathers.

(3) The latency of this memory until it is rekindled by a recurrence of associated ideas.

(4) The unconsciousness with which habitual actions come to be performed.

The general theory of development and inheritance which Butler advocates embodies each of the above principles, and may be stated in his own words as follows:

“We grow our limbs as we do, and possess the instincts we possess, because we remember having grown our limbs in this way, and having had these instincts in past generations when we were in the persons of our forefathers—each individual life adding a small (but so small, in any one lifetime, as to be hardly appreciated)

amount of new experiences to the general store of memory; we have thus got into certain habits which we can now rarely break; and we do much of what we do unconsciously on the same principle as that . . . on which we do all other habitual actions, with the greater ease and unconsciousness the more often we repeat them."

Returning to the question with which we started—the question, namely, of what causes the changes in species by means of which evolution proceeds—we find that Butler's answer is as follows: "The variations, whose accumulation results in species, will be recognised as due to the wants and endeavours of the living forms in which they appear." It will be seen that this answer incorporates the views both of Lamarck and of Hering. Lamarck had said that species change by adapting themselves to changes in their environment. "Yes," said Butler in effect "because when the environment changes the organism naturally desires to change too, in order that it may be comfortable."

But Butler did not stop here. Not only did species change as the result of modifications in their environment, but they also possessed the power to change spontaneously as the result of the movement of life within them seeking to express itself in ever higher and higher forms. And the machinery by means of which the change is effected is Professor Hering's unconscious memory. This memory engenders not only the general movement of evolution, but

accomplishes each individual step of which that movement is composed. The chicken grows the horny tip to its beak with which it picks its way out of the shell "because it remembers having grown it before and the use it made of it." Thus the horny tip is made "as the joint result both of desire and experience. . . . Memory, therefore, is supposed to guide the chicken not only in respect of the main design, but in respect also of every atomic action which goes to make up the execution of the design."

INHERITANCE OF MUTILATIONS

A word may be added on mutilations.

As we have seen, the question had been raised as to whether mutilations were properly to be regarded as variations, and whether, if so, they could be inherited. Butler answered both questions in the affirmative, with the proviso, however, that they were usually not inherited.

On the one hand, there was the obvious fact that if you cut off the tails of a pair of mice, their offspring were born with tails. On the other, there were the experiments of M. Brown Sequard. Now, Butler not only believed that he was right and Weismann wrong on the basis of the evidence, but seems to have thought himself bound on other grounds to insist on the inheritance of variations due to accident, if only in order to explain why evolution progresses. In the majority of cases he was prepared to agree that the accumulated weight of normal experience over countless generations would be too much

for the accident or mutilation, so that it would fail to establish itself. In certain cases, however, where it was sufficiently striking and yet failed to kill, it might insert itself as a permanent feature in the biography of the organism. This memory of the most striking events in varied lifetimes "I maintain with Professor Hering to be the differentiating cause which, accumulated in countless generations, has led up from the amœba to man. If there had been no such memory, the amœba of one generation would have exactly resembled the amœba of the preceding, and a perfect cycle would have been established."

The importance here attributed to the inheritance of accidental variations is neither consistent with nor necessary to Butler's theory. It is unnecessary because, as we have already seen, he is able sufficiently to account for variations, and hence for progress in evolution as the result (1) of the creature's desire to adapt itself to a changed environment, or (2) of purely spontaneous development, due to the fact that life moulds, animates and transcends matter.

It is inconsistent because, having described, and rightly described, the issue between Darwin and himself as that "between teleology and non-teleology, between the purposiveness and non-purposiveness of the organs in animal bodies," he is here attributing to the occurrence of striking and presumably fortuitous events the root cause for our possessing the organs we possess and having evolved in the way in which we have evolved. Striking events may exert a modifying influence,

and we may very well remember them, but they do not fit into a purposive scheme, and it is charitable to Butler to forget this slight lapse into inconsistency and to think of him as attributing the fact of evolution solely to the desire to evolve. We are what we are because we wanted to be so in the past, and we shall be what we shall be because we want to be so in the present.

Accepting this doctrine as the short statement of Butler's views on evolution, to what sort of universe does it commit us ?

BUTLER'S CONCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSE

Butler's views on metaphysical questions are all more or less readily deducible from his biological position. It will be sufficient, therefore, to indicate their main trend without treating them in the detail which we have bestowed upon his more important biological views. It will be most convenient to sketch the outline of Butler's position as a series of answers to certain fundamental questions.

(1) Why did life arise ? Butler saw that contemporary science was in a difficulty here. On the one hand, it distrusted spontaneous generation never having met with such a phenomenon ; on the other, it disliked playing into the hands of the clergy by invoking a *deus ex machina* to do for life what life could not do for itself. For those who had travelled along the road which biology had discovered right back to the initial monad of life, the primordial protoplasmic globule, it was intolerable to have to introduce some mystical being who

was either unthinkable, or, if thinkable at all, thinkable simply as a glorified edition of ourselves, to put the monad there.

There was, so Butler thought, only one other alternative, and that was that the germs of life had "developed in the course of time from some thing or things that were not living at all; that they had grown up, in fact, out of the material substances and forces of the world, in some manner more or less analogous to that in which men had been developed from themselves."

(2) What is life? Clearly the being possessed of memory. Butler had already defined life as that property of matter whereby it can remember. But, as we shall see in a moment, he was inclined to doubt the existence of matter altogether. Living, then, is simply remembering, "the life of a thing at any moment being the memories which at that moment it retains."

(3) Is there on this definition such a thing as matter at all? Butler answered that there was not. "I can conceive," he said, "of no matter which is not able to remember a little and which is not living in respect of what it remembers."

His chief ground for this belief was that of analogy. He had already said that dead matter developed into the amœba by a process analogous to that by which the amœba afterwards developed into man. Now this process, according to Butler, was memory, and memory was life. Hence, if the processes are analogous, the chain of memory or life must stretch back not only from man to the amœba, but from the amœba to dead matter. But

this is only another way of saying that the matter was never quite dead. If it were, it could never have developed into the amœba by the memory process.

Hence, in so far as it possessed the potentiality for becoming life, matter was already alive. There is, therefore, no real distinction between the organic and the inorganic.

(4) What, then, is death? Death is simply the breaking up of an association of living molecules which we call an organism. The molecules were not once dead and then had life smuggled into them; they always were and will be alive.

(5) What is the object of life? Butler's answer is obscure. For Shaw, it is the development of a higher form of life from a lower, height being defined in terms of continuous emancipation from the sway of matter, that is, of the less organic and continuous achievement of greater intensity and variety of life, that is, of the more organic; and there can be little doubt that Shaw's answer is the logical outcome of Butler's doctrine. It is, indeed, possible, even probable, that Butler, had he lived, would have accepted the picture of beings relatively emancipated from matter presented in the last act of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* as a representation of an advanced stage of his evolutionary process, but there must always remain a doubt as to his real views on this question.¹

(6) What is God? God is everywhere and is everything. He is nothing more nor less than

¹ For the reason of this doubt see pp. 165 and 166.

life. He is, therefore, identified with me; and also with you. We are, moreover, identified with each other, I being by Butler's law of identity simply a new edition of the primordial cell of life, and you by the same law being another edition of the same cell. But a man is his ancestors; therefore, since our ancestors are one, you and I are one. And as I am ultimately one with my protoplasmic ancestors, and you with yours, so are we both, in virtue of our participation in life, one with God. Thus God is the sum total of all that is life.

Butler is opposed to the theologians, then, in his refusal to admit the existence of a Deity external to ourselves. God is within us, not outside us, and if we and all other forms of life were eliminated from the Universe there would be no God left.

(7) But equally there would be no Universe left. Butler, as we have seen, refused, at any rate in his later writings, to admit any distinction between the organic and inorganic. Not only can we draw no dividing line between the stone and the amœba hoping thereby to place the amœba on the organic and the stone on the inorganic side of the line, but we cannot even draw a line within the stone itself between those parts of it which are alive and those which are not.

You cannot get life out of what is not life, and we shall accordingly have to modify the position taken up in (1) above, by substituting for the "material substances and forces of the world,"

“substances and forces apparently lifeless, but which nevertheless contained within themselves the potentialities of life.”

“We shall endeavour,” was Butler’s conclusion, “to see the so-called inorganic as living, in respect of the qualities which it has in common with the so-called organic, rather than the organic as non-living in respect of the qualities it has in common with the inorganic.”

As opposed to the mechanists, then, Butler held that the Universe was life throughout, and that the spiritual and living underlay and transcended the material and brutal.

The significance of this attitude for future developments will be brought out in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that in a generation when men either invoked a personal God or supplanted Him with a machine, Butler resolutely and fiercely challenged both the prevalent attitudes of his time. He first antagonised the theologians by making fun of their God as a priestly creation made by man in his own image to get him out of his scrapes, take his side in his quarrels, bear the responsibility for his misdemeanours, and make things uncomfortable for his enemies, and then antagonised the men of science by refusing to accept the mechanical Universe within which they sought to confine the variety and multiplicity of life. In an age when every man was on the side of the apes or the angels, Butler sided with neither ; and it is only to-day, when we can apparently entertain the possibility of a Universe which is neither a Divine toy nor a mindless

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machine, that the real originality and significance of his attitude becomes apparent.

In the next two chapters I propose to discuss, first, some of the developments of Butler's views which have taken place during the last twenty years, and, secondly, the manner of their reception by his contemporaries, a reception to which his peculiar methods of controversy, as well as his opinion of scientific men generally, are directly traceable.

CHAPTER TWO

Butler's Influence on Modern Thought

THE degree of importance which in the light of subsequent developments should be attributed to the theory described in the last chapter is, for various reasons, difficult to estimate. In the field of strict biology Butler's influence has been comparatively small. The current of interest has set away from the topics which he mainly discussed, and the weight of evidence subsequently accumulated seems to be, on the whole, against him. In the wider field of philosophical speculation, however, his influence has been very great. It is not too much to say that the break-up of the materialist frost, in which nineteenth century science was fast set, was, in the main, due to Butler, and that it is to those first tentative thawing operations initiated by him in the nineteenth century that the fully fledged theory of Creative Evolution in the twentieth owes its origin.

We will very briefly consider, first, the subsequent developments of Butler's views in the field of strict biology, and, secondly, the much more important bearing of his work upon the trend of speculative philosophy.

BUTLER AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BIOLOGY

Mutations.

Butler's chief biological interest lay, as we have seen, in the refutation of the theory that variations were fortuitous, and in the establishment of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The controversy which this issue aroused is now very largely an echo of the past. Although the questions in dispute have not been answered satisfactorily one way or the other, they are no longer the questions which chiefly concern biologists. Most writers on the subject would now agree that it is impossible to hold the doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characteristics in anything like its original form; on the other hand, there is considerable evidence in favour of the doctrine in some other form, and, owing to the ambiguity of the terms in use, it would always be possible for Butler to maintain that this other form was the form in which he held it.

An enormous mass of evidence has been acquired with regard to variations since Butler's controversy with Darwin. The evidence, in fact, seems at present to overwhelm all the attempts that have been made to classify it, with the result that in biology we have the somewhat unusual position of a science with more facts than theories to account for them. In the light of this new evidence the chief subject of interest in biology for a number of years has been the relative

importance of (a) small individual variations of the kind which distinguish father from son and brother from brother, variations which are the result of functional or environmental differences, and of (b) large single variations called mutations or "sports" which occur rarely and result in conspicuous divergencies of type, culminating in a definite change in the species. Darwin admitted both, but thought that (a) were more important than (b). As we have already seen, he believed that (a) were occasionally transmissible, and that the slow accumulation of small individual variations was the chief factor in determining changes in species. Darwin was largely reinforced in this view by his belief that the large single variations or "sports" were confined to individuals, and would, therefore, in all probability be swamped by inter-crossing.

As a result, however, of the work of Professor de Vries, who published, in 1900, a book entitled *The Mutation Theory*, it now appears that large single variations are much more important than Darwin thought them. De Vries' theory briefly was that "the attributes of organisms consist of distinct separate and independent units. These units can be associated in groups. . . ." Although the units cannot vary, being homogeneous, and apparently immutable, they can be absent or present; and it is clear that their absence or presence will make a very considerable difference between, let us say, parents who have them and offspring who have them not. "The adoption of this principle," continues de Vries, "influences

our attitude towards the theory of descent by suggesting to us that species have arisen from one another by a discontinuous, as opposed to a continuous process. Each new unit forming a fresh step in the process sharply and completely separates the new form as an independent species from that from which it sprang. The new species appears all at once; it originates from the parent species without any visible preparation, and without any obvious series of transitional forms.”¹

These discontinuous variations or mutations differ from Darwin’s “large single variations” in two respects. They are racial, and not individual, occurring in many members of the species simultaneously; and they are normally inheritable, whereas Darwin’s were not.

Now de Vries suggests that all new and constant characteristics in species are the result of mutations, and denies that the ordinary individual fluctuations, to which Darwin attributed importance, have any effect in changing species as a whole. Nevertheless, the evidence for mutations, strong as it is, is by no means conclusively in favour of the view that they are the sole factors in producing changes in species. There are numerous cases in which species are linked together by inter-grades, so that the various steps by which one evolved from another can be traced, while there are other cases in which changes appear to be due to the sudden absence

¹ It is interesting to note the marked similarity between de Vries’ theory of discontinuous biological units and the modern “quantum” theory with regard to the nature of matter. The Universe, as revealed both to physics and to biology, appears to proceed by jumps.

or presence of specific factors which remain integral and refuse to blend with other factors. This latter type of case affords strong evidence for de Vries' theory.

How does this theory affect Butler's view? By no means unfavourably. Butler, in fact, seems to have anticipated by one of his inspired guesses much of what de Vries subsequently discovered by patient research. In *God the Known and God the Unknown*, a series of essays in the *Examiner*, which first appeared in 1879, we find him providing for each of the two methods by which species appear to change—the method, namely, of small individual fluctuations and the method of sudden, discontinuous racial mutations referred to above.

“Under these circumstances,” he wrote, “an organism must act in one or other of these two ways; it must either change slowly and continuously with its surroundings, paying cash for everything, meeting the smallest change with a corresponding modification . . . or it must put off change as long as possible, and then make larger and more sweeping changes. They” (that is to say, organisms) “will deal promptly with things which they can get at easily, and which lie more upon the surface; those, however, which are more troublesome to reach, and lie deeper, will be handled upon more cataclysmic principles, being allowed longer periods of repose followed by short periods of great activity. . . . It may be questioned whether what is called a sport” (or mutation) “is not the organic expression of discontent which has been long felt, but which has

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not been alluded to, nor been met step by step by as much small remedial modification as was found practicable ; so that when a change does come, it comes by way of revolution.”

Butler, then, denies that any difference of principle lies concealed in the apparent difference between small individual fluctuations and sudden racial mutations, accounting for them both, as he is perfectly entitled to do on his premises, as different expressions of the will to evolve which is inherent in every living organism.

Mendelism and the Chromosomes.

The most recent work in biology cannot be said to affect Butler's philosophical hypothesis to an appreciable extent one way or the other. Butler's object was to evolve a plausible theory to explain the facts ; he never pretended either that his theory never went beyond the facts, or that, in those respects in which it did go beyond them, it was capable of positive proof. He was content so long as no facts could be produced which definitely contradicted it. Thus, he would have been the first to admit that his theory of unconscious memory was a piece of pure speculation. Nobody had seen unconscious memory working, and there was, therefore, no direct scientific evidence for it. But it was a highly probable inference from the evidence. Butler, then, would have put his position much as follows : “ We must try to explain the facts somehow. Does not my theory of unconscious memory, admittedly only a guess, explain most of them well, and all of

them tolerably well? What is more, are there any facts which definitely contradict it?"

Now, modern biology does not seek to answer this question. It is concerned not with the metaphysical explanation of variations and heredity, but with their machinery. It can certainly tell us that the doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characteristics will not hold in its crudest form, and that the child of English-speaking parents will have no advantage in the matter of learning English over the child of French parents if both are placed in identical surroundings. But then Butler never supposed that it would, although he might have had his doubts if the parents on each side had spoken English and French respectively for a couple of thousand generations. When, however, we turn to the constructive side of modern biology, we find that it is mainly concerned with the attempt to identify and to locate the factors of heredity. As de Vries had already suggested, these must be regarded as single independent units, as distinct and unblendable as the atoms which form the basis of physical matter. The Abbé Mendel showed how certain arrangements of these units or factors, which were, of course, located in the germ cells of the parents, resulted in the presence or absence of certain definite characteristics in offspring, and enunciated laws which enable us to predict the characteristics in offspring which will result from different combinations of factors in the parents.

Modern researches have enabled us to identify these factors in what are known as "chromo-

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somes," the name given to certain thread- or rod-like streaks found in the central portion or nucleus of the cells of which the body is composed. The factors are arranged in a definite order along the line of the chromosome. The offspring inherits two corresponding sets of these factors, one derived from its father, the other from its mother; but since the reproductive cells are formed by a division in the chromosome, which splits into two, the actual factors which occur in the reproductive cells will depend upon the point at which the break in the chromosomes of which they are formed occur. Thus, variations in offspring are thought of as being due to the presence or absence of certain factors in the reproductive cells of the parents, such presence or absence being determined by the point of division in the chromosomes.

The chromosome theory throws an important light upon the machinery both of variation and heredity; it does not, however, explain it. Nor does it seem possible that the explanation can be sought on purely materialist lines. If we are to *explain* the facts, as distinct from merely describing them, it seems that we must postulate the operation of some directive force or agency as the cause of their occurrence—an agency which is not expressible in physiological terms, and is most certainly not to be observed by physiologists.

The Vitalist Position.

The existence of such an agency must from its

very nature be an inference—an inference from the behaviour of living beings—and the fact that such an inference goes beyond the data, and, therefore, shocks the physiologist, is no reason why it should not be drawn. Nor is it to be supposed that the mere increase in our knowledge of the machinery of heredity will ever make such an inference unnecessary. If we were able to show, as some biologists hope to do, that all variations are quantitative in character—are explicable, that is to say, in terms of the presence or absence of certain indestructible factors—even if we could go still further and, proceeding along the lines indicated by modern research, show that such presence or absence was always due to the order or arrangement of the factors along the line of the chromosomes, the question would still remain, “Who or what is responsible for this order or arrangement?” If our answer to this question takes the form of postulating some physiological factor which lies still further back, we shall have to explain the occurrence of that factor. Push the origin of variations as far back as we may, we always come to a point at which, in order to explain them at all, we must have recourse to a non-materialistic answer; an answer, that is to say, which postulates the action of some will or force, a force which, if we will, we may call with Butler just “life,” but which, whatever we call it, is not reducible to purely physical terms. We must, in short, either bring ourselves to admit that in the long run the spiritual determines and moulds the material, or else we must give up the

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attempt to explain the material. We can, of course, always take refuge in Darwin's hypothesis and explain what happens as the result of pure chance ; but that is no explanation at all.

Thus far we have put the case in its worst aspect from the vitalist point of view. We have assumed, that is to say, that the cause of variation is to be found in the presence or absence of purely quantitative factors. But the available evidence to-day is by no means unanimously in favour of the supposition that variation is purely quantitative in character. As Professors Thomson and Geddes put it, "there seems to be another kind of variation, qualitative rather than quantitative, substantive rather than architectural." And if it be true that this is the case, how are we to explain such qualitative variations in physiological terms? "What," Professors Thomson and Geddes proceed to ask, "can be said as to their origin?"—a question which they answer as follows: "With all recognition and appreciation of the work and thought above summarised, we cannot but think that the secret of variability lies yet deeper, in the very nature of the living organism itself. It has been a proteus from the first ; changefulness is its most abiding quality ; in short, the essence of the creature is its innate creativeness."

"The essence of the creature is its innate creativeness." But this is just what Butler would have said. Could there, indeed, be a more perfect statement of his views? If you want the real answer to the question why organisms

change, said Butler, it is that they change because they want to do so, or, in other words, because of their own "innate creativeness." But what does innate creativeness mean? Can something come out of nothing?

To answer this question we must extend the scope of our survey, and consider the significance of Butler's work from a more philosophical point of view.

II

BUTLER'S CONTRIBUTION TO PHILOSOPHY

The Mechanist Theory of the Universe.

We said at the beginning of the chapter that Butler was responsible for the break up of the materialist frost. It will enable us to obtain a clearer vision of the significance of his work, to get it into perspective, as it were, if we begin by briefly explaining what the materialist frost was. Stated quite simply, it amounted to the elimination of mind from the Universe; the Universe, in fact, had become in the nineteenth century simply a piece of complicated mechanism.

To this general view of the Universe all the sciences had contributed; it received a backing from contemporary physics, biology, astronomy and geology, and was reinforced by the growth of atheism. But the chief part in the elimination of mind from the Universe was played by biology and psychology. Copernicus had abolished the primacy of man's planet; Darwin abolished the

primacy of man within his planet, and psychology was soon to abolish the primacy of mind within the man.

As regards biology, we have already had occasion to notice the one very important respect in which the views of Darwin and of Lamarck (so far as their first and simplest statement goes) were identical. Both views agreed in dispensing with the existence of any creative mind or force in terms of which to explain the process of evolution, and did, in fact, explain that process as one in which intelligence and will, purpose and design, played no part. Evolution, it is agreed, proceeds by means of variations. According to Darwin, these variations are the result of chance; according to Lamarck, they are conditioned by changes in environment to which the organism continually adapts itself. In the one case changes in species are a pure fluke; in the other they are the result of the influence exerted by an inorganic environment. Yet it is agreed that, as the result of these variations, all the multiplicity and diversity of life, including, incidentally, the highly developed intelligence of man, have been engendered by the simple operation of the law of cause and effect.

Now, one way of stating this result is to say that the Universe is mechanistic. By this is meant that the workings of Nature are like the operations of a machine, so that whatever happens in Nature happens, as it does in a machine, as the result of the automatic interaction of the various parts. The universe, in short, is like the works

of a gigantic clock : somebody, at some time or other, wound the clock up, and thereafter it proceeded, and will continue to proceed indefinitely, each occurrence following from and being caused by a preceding occurrence, until the clock runs down.

To the question " Who or what set the clock going ? " the mechanist could not give an answer. If you believe that every event is determined by a previous event, in accordance with the law of cause and effect, it is obviously impossible to supply a first cause, since a first cause would contradict the rest of the theory. But this inability to get the world started was not, after all, a very grave disadvantage, since all rival views were on this point equally at a loss. Even if a god were invoked to originate the whole process, it would still be necessary to inquire what caused God.

The advantage of the mechanist view lay in this, that, given the initial kick that set the Universe going, it can and does proceed thereafter of its own volition, without the interruption of any unknown and extraneous will, force, agency, god or creative power.

But what about mind ? Is this, too, the sport of material factors, and eternally subject to the law of cause and effect ? Is it not in some unexplained way different ?

The task of subduing mind to the requirements of the mechanist hypothesis fell within the province of psychology. Psychology was quite prepared to undertake it.

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The Parallelist Psychology.

There had long been current in psychology a theory known as the Parallelist hypothesis. According to this theory the mind was radically different from the body, and there was not, nor could there be, any interaction between them ; they proceed, in fact, side by side, like two parallel lines which never intersect. There is, however, an underlying relationship between them, such that any event in the body has its inevitable counterpart in the mind. Since there is no interaction, it could not, of course, be said that the bodily event actually caused the mental event, but this much at least was certain, that the one could not occur without the other.

As the theory developed, however, the possibility of interaction, which had at first been denied, came more and more to be admitted. But since it is inconceivable that the incorporeal and immaterial, being without weight, form or substance, can be affected by the corporeal and material, it could only be admitted if mind and body were fundamentally of the same kind ; it followed, therefore, that they were of the same kind. Matter, in fact, by a continual process of refinement and purification, had assumed a form so tenuous and etiolated that it had practically ceased to possess the common material characteristics of weight, density, shape and size, and, becoming conscious of itself, could even manage to persuade itself into the belief that it was something other than matter, that it was, in short, mind, possessing the power of spontaneous creation in its own right.

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This belief, however, is, for the materialist, most assuredly delusive, since, as we have already seen, there can be no mental event without a corresponding bodily event. A corresponding bodily event is taken to mean a preceding bodily event. We are all familiar with that explanation of psychological phenomena which interprets the mental in terms of the material. We are accustomed to say, "I had bad dreams last night because I failed to digest my supper," or, "I feel irritable because I have been out in an east wind"; and it was precisely this interpretation which, enormously elaborated and refined, was now used to explain *all* mental phenomena.

Bodily events, it was agreed, occur as the result of the influence of external environment. These events, in the form of sensations, are conveyed by neural processes to the brain, which is simply that collection of grey matter, nerves and cells revealed to the physiologist's microscope. But the brain is conscious, consciousness or mind being, in fact, that form of rarefied matter of which we have already spoken, which accompanies and lights up the brain like the halo round the head of a saint, or, to speak more accurately if less elegantly, like the phosphorescent glow which surrounds a decayed lobster.

Hence the train of processes by which we became conscious is one which starts from our external environment, passes through the body, and ends in the brain, where it becomes lighted up by the glow of consciousness, in virtue of which we say that we know it. Causation proceeds

always from the physical to the mental, and there can be no mental event without a preceding physical event. Mind, in short, is not creative ; it is reflective. Its function is that of a mirror to reflect or register occurrences in the brain ; it has no power to initiate anything which is not in the brain, and nothing can appear in it which is not also appearing in the brain. It is, in short, simply the brain's awareness of itself.

The Universe that resulted.

Putting the biology and the psychology together, what do we find ? All mental events are caused by preceding bodily events ; all bodily events are subject to the law of cause and effect, and are caused, therefore, by preceding bodily events. These preceding events are the result of inheritance or of external environment. In so far as they are the result of inheritance they can be traced back to the variations which made the creature what it is. These variations are themselves either chance happenings or are the result of the action of external environment. The chain of causation is, therefore, complete ; at every stage the material conditions and precedes the vital, and we have only to learn enough about evolution and physiology to be able to describe and predict any and every event that has occurred or can occur in the history of the Universe. Professor Tyndall, speaking at a meeting of the British Association, grandiosely summed up the position when he prophesied that science would one day be able to envisage and to explain all that

has existed and does exist in terms of the "ultimately purely natural and inevitable march of evolution from the atoms of the primæval nebula to the proceedings of the British Association for the advancement of science."

It will be readily apparent how adversely this view reflects upon man's natural belief in the special significance of life in general and of human life in particular. To the general disparagement of the importance of life encouraged by biology and psychology, geology and astronomy were only too ready to contribute. Geology had enormously extended the age of the world, astronomy the size and spread of space; there were vast epochs when it was practically certain that the earth was without life; there were millions of other worlds in which no life was known to exist, and in the vast immensities of astronomical space and geological time life seemed like a tiny glow, a feeble and uncertain flicker, destined one day (when, for example, the heat of the sun had cooled to such an extent that the earth was no longer able to support life) to be ignominiously snuffed out in the one portion of the Universe which had known it.

Life, then, was regarded not as the one significant thing in the Universe in terms of which we are to interpret the rest, but as an incidental product thrown up in the course of evolution, a mere eddy in the primæval slime, a fortuitous development of matter, by means of which matter had by a fluke become conscious of itself. Mind was an outside passenger across a fundamentally hostile environ-

ment—a passenger, moreover, who would one day finish his journey with as little noise and significance as he had begun it. In every direction the material and the brutal underlay and conditioned the vital and the spiritual: matter everywhere determined mind; mind nowhere determined matter.

Ultimate Views determined by Temperament.

Such was the general view of the Universe, implied or expressed, with which those who took the opposite side to Butler were imbued, such the general view which he had set himself to challenge. Butler's opponents were determined to throw doubt upon the inheritance of acquired characteristics, because such inheritance suggested purpose and design and looked like the development of an evolutionary plan. Butler looked with favour upon such inheritance, because he believed in purpose and design and thought that there was an evolutionary plan.

The controversy between mechanists and vitalists is not, and probably never will be, susceptible of definite settlement in favour either of one side or of the other. The issue of the controversy turns largely upon factors which are unknown, and both sides, mechanists as well as vitalists, make inferences about these factors which amount in the case of both parties to an act of faith. This act of faith represents an attempt to bring that part of the Universe which is unknown into consonance with our desires. The nature of the act of faith we shall perform, depends, therefore, upon the nature of our desires. If, under James'

classification of minds into tough and tender, we are "tough minded," we shall tend to welcome rather than to deplore the discovery of the unimportance of mind, make much of our hardihood in facing unpalatable facts, and take the mechanist side. If on the other hand, we are "tender minded," and Butler, in spite of all the superficial evidence to the contrary, was very tender minded, we shall insist on the ultimate dominance of mind over matter and vindicate the supremacy of spirit.

In maintaining, therefore, that we vary and develop as the result neither of chance, nor, ultimately, even of environment, but because we want to, Butler was asserting his fundamental belief in the capacity of mind to mould and determine matter, a belief which finally led him to the extreme position of denying that there was any such thing as matter to be moulded.

But though the ultimate decision in controversies of this kind is the work of our temperaments rather than of our intellects, the *rôle* of the latter being confined to the important task of inventing arguments and justifications for what we instinctively want to believe, there are, nevertheless, secular changes in the attitude of successive generations, or of large groups of men in a single generation. Such a change has occurred since Butler began to write. When he attacked Darwin, materialism was in the ascendant; when we read Butler to-day, we read him as instinctive vitalists, and Butler's real importance lies in the part he played in bringing this change about.

Movement away from Materialism.

It is not possible here to detail the evidence which has led to the gradual abandonment of nineteenth-century materialism ; we cannot even sketch it in general outline. One or two points, however, may be mentioned, which are more or less closely related to Butler's own line of argument, to indicate the general drift of modern thought away from materialism.

How, it may be asked, is the mechanist to explain the occurrence of one of de Vries' mutations ? Can it be shown to be due to the action of the inorganic upon the organic, of the material upon the vital ? It hardly seems so. Nothing, it appears, in the previous history of the species foreshadows the occurrence of the mutation ; it simply and quite suddenly appears. Once it appears the ordinary factors of selection and environment come into operation, determining whether it will survive and develop or die out. But these factors are quite unable to account for its sudden appearance. Clearly it cannot be regarded as an example of adaptation to environment, since there has been no change in the environment to call forth the adaptation. Can it, then, be a pure fluke ? This is a possible view, but one which it is peculiarly difficult for the consistent materialist to accept, since for him everything proceeds in accordance with the law of cause and effect, and a fluke has no cause. If it had, it would not be a fluke.

But if we once begin to conceive of evolution as the expression of some purposive vital force or spirit which moulds and animates matter, the

explanation of the mutation becomes a comparatively simple matter. On this basis the mutation is nothing more nor less than the embodiment of a new advance on the part of the force, which expresses itself in all the various and changing phenomena whose procession constitutes what we call evolution; as Butler would put it, the organisms composing the species change because they want to, and they want to because they are the manifestation of an essentially creative and dynamic principle.

The same principle may be invoked to explain the qualitative changes, those puzzling appearances of a something really new, which Professors Thomson and Geddes have noted as a distinguishing mark of some variations. How, it may be asked, can you explain the phenomenon of newness in a mechanistic Universe? In such a Universe the apparent newness of the present is a delusion since the present has always existed in an incapsulated form in the past, waiting to be developed out of the past. In other words, the present is not new at all any more than the movements of a clock are new. If, however, the species expresses a creative vital principle, it is natural that it should from time to time change in a manner which cannot be predicted or accounted for by any of its preceding states, that it should, in fact, really do something new.

Having proceeded so far we may have recourse to the philosopher Bergson for a pertinent question which the mechanists have great difficulty in answering, but in which Butler would

have found no difficulty at all. "Why," says Bergson in effect, "if evolution, as the mechanists would have us believe, is to be interpreted in terms of a purely automatic reaction to a physical environment, did not the process stop long ago? Many beings have already been produced in the past history of evolution who were not only as well fitted to their environment as, for example, man, but, in respect of their purely physical qualities, were much better fitted! Elephants and tortoises live longer; monkeys are not so subject to disease; there is scarcely any creature which is not more able to protect itself against the vagaries of the weather, while, as for chances of survival, the complete helplessness of the human infant and the length of the period over which that helplessness extends, places it in a ludicrously unfavourable contrast with the hardy and self-sufficient offspring of the animal world. If, therefore, adaptation to environment, or fitness to survive, were the moving forces behind evolution, we should have expected evolution to have ended with the elephant and the monkey." Why, then, did it go on to produce man? Why, indeed, unless evolution is to be interpreted as the expression of some vital impulse, striving at whatever risk to express itself in ever higher and more complicated forms of life, and refusing to rest content with mere adaptation or survival. Life, thus envisaged, is of its very essence a continuous and dynamic urge, and all the forms in which it expresses itself together with their innumerable variations, must be regarded

as the outcome of a continuous push from behind.

The Modern Conception of Matter.

At this point modern physics takes up the tale with its question, "What is matter?" This question seems scarcely to have troubled the nineteenth-century scientists. For them matter was a clear, definite, tangible something lying out there in space, upon which the horse sense of the materialist could base his unalterable convictions. But the nineteenth-century world of solid matter has vanished into thin air. The matter of modern electrical and relativist theory is something infinitely mysterious and quite unthinkable. It is a relationship between point instants, or a hypothetical nucleus of positive electricity surrounded by negative electrons, and the modern tendency to explain things in terms of mind is simply a very natural preference for working with the comparatively known rather than with the almost entirely unknown. Modern matter has, in fact, become such an exceedingly vague thing, that it is almost impossible to say what it can and what it cannot do, and to attribute to it, as did the nineteenth-century mechanists, the power of producing and determining mind and setting in motion the whole chain of evolutionary causation, is no longer to claim the advantage of an economy in assumption, but is rather to postulate the interposition of a mystery at every stage of the process. The modern preference for attributing the underlying causes

of phenomena to the creative power of mind or spirit, rather than to the operation of material forces, constitutes a powerful reinforcement of Butler's general attitude both to the Universe as a whole and to the significance of evolution, the conclusions of modern biologists, psychologists and philosophers being little more than a perpetual re-echo of Butler's "We should endeavour to see the so-called inorganic as living in respect of the qualities it has in common with the organic, rather than the organic as non-living in respect of the qualities it has in common with the inorganic"; it has, moreover, a special bearing upon the problem of heredity, which he debated so vigorously with Weismann.

Assuming for a moment that Weismann was right in regarding the germ cell as a separate entity, entirely screened from the experiences of the organism in which it is temporarily located, it will easily be seen how difficult it was for nineteenth-century scientists to believe Butler when he told them that it remembered those experiences. How, asked the scientists, can it do so since, apart from any other consideration, the germ cell is of much too simple a structure physiologically for it either to realise the varied experiences of the organism, or to remember them, if it did? The fact that we are not yet in a position to answer this question does not mean that an answer is not more readily conceivable for us than it was for Butler's contemporaries. And it is more readily conceivable, just because, having been led to realise more fully the extent of our

ignorance of the nature of matter, we are less inclined to pronounce upon what it can and cannot do. In spite of the discovery of the chromosomes, we are still too ignorant of the medium of heredity to say that the germ cell can or cannot remember and hand on the memory of what has happened to it on previous occasions; but we are much less ready to say than were Butler's contemporaries, that the fact of our being unable to observe the mechanism of memory is a reason for disbelieving in it.

Memory as a Purely Mental Function.

We are prepared to go even farther than this. Under the influence of Bergson we are inclined to maintain, those of us at least—and we are an increasing number—who are Vitalists, that memory is not a cerebral function at all, but is a mental or spiritual one; that, for this reason, if you could observe the mechanism of a man's brain when he was engaged in remembering something, it is quite possible you would see no modification at all; and that, even if you did see something, what you observed would not be the actual remembering but simply the mechanism of recall. It is held, that is to say, that the mental and spiritual not only precedes but overflows the physical and cerebral, and that it is possible for events to occur in the mind which have no counterpart in the physical organism. Mind, in fact, or life, to use the language of Creative Evolution, animates and conditions matter, and instead of seeking, as did Weismann and his

contemporaries, to explain mental occurrences in terms of matter, we shall with Butler look for the explanation of material phenomena in the activity of mind or life.

It is for this reason that Butler's theory of memory can be considered independently of that rather dubious hypothesis of Hering's as to the existence of molecular vibrations in the physical organism, upon which he was so anxious to base it, and it is for this same reason that we refuse to share the scepticism of Butler's nineteenth-century critics, when we find ourselves unable to detect the material workings of memory in the structure of the germ cell. "For the present at least," says Professor Hartog in the authoritative introduction written from the biological point of view, which he has contributed to Butler's *Unconscious Memory*, "the problem of heredity can only be elucidated by the light of mental and not material processes." If this be so, the inability to observe the material mechanism which Butler's theory was once supposed to involve, need no longer disturb us; either it does not exist, or we know so little about matter that it might easily exist without our observing it.

Butler's theory of memory is really an inference from the behaviour of living things, an inference for which, as Professor Hartog says, Butler shows that there is a very strong presumption; and for those who can on general grounds accept the Vitalist hypothesis, the absence of material evidence for all the compli-

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cated mental operations, which Butler's theory of heredity involves, does not afford the grounds for refusing to share his inferences, which his more materialistically minded contemporaries considered adequate.

It only remains to add that the fully developed implications of Butler's Vitalistic theory of evolution are to be found in Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*. Shaw has elsewhere handsomely acknowledged his debt to Butler, but none of his work is more directly and continuously influenced by his predecessor than the masterly preface on the theory of Creative Evolution, which he has written to his famous *Pentateuch*. There is nothing in the preface with which Butler would have disagreed; there is little which Butler's work has not directly inspired.

CHAPTER THREE

Professionalism

I

ATTITUDE OF THE SCIENTISTS TOWARDS BUTLER

I PROPOSE to consider in this chapter the reception of Butler's views by the scientists, and the effect of that reception upon Butler himself. The subject is more important than might appear at first glance, for two reasons : it affords a striking commentary on the ways of professionalism in general, and it accounts very largely for Butler's peculiar dislike of professionalism, a dislike which we shall find expressing itself in various forms in everything that he wrote. We may put the point briefly by saying that Butler very frequently refused to take the world seriously because the scientists refused to take him seriously ; he would not accept the experts at their pretended value, because the pretence of the experts was that his own value was negligible.

It may be asked why it was that the scientists ignored Butler. The answer is not far to seek. It was because Butler was not a man of science ; and in saying that he was not a man of science, we are saying also that he possessed four fatal defects in one who wished to be accepted as such :

he was versatile, he was amusing, he had no technical terms and he was an ironist. Let us take separately these four counts in the indictment against him.

Reasons for it : His Versatility.

Butler was exceedingly versatile. He wrote satire, art criticism, philosophy, textual criticism, general wisdom and one first-rate novel. Moreover, he was an earnest though unsuccessful painter, translated Homer, and composed two operas.

Now there exists a general prepossession to the effect that if a man does a number of things, he cannot do any of them well. It is probable that this prepossession arises from the unconscious envy of those who, not being able to do anything well, take it out of those who can by insisting that, if they do have the hardihood to excel in any sphere, they shall excel in that sphere only. Once a man has made a name for himself in any particular department of life or letters, the world resolutely refuses to admit that he can succeed outside it. Charlie Chaplin, the film comedian, being naturally anxious to extend his art by impersonating a tragic character, is met by a persistent refusal on the part of the public not only to allow him to be anything but funny, but even to admit the possibility that he could be anything but funny; while anybody who is accustomed to review books belonging to some particular branch of science or of literature, knows how hard it is to convince editors that he

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can review anything else. The world loves to affix labels; to know what a man is and what may be expected of him saves trouble, and woe betide any writer who, having been relegated by the public to a particular pigeon hole, has the temerity to step outside it.

Now Butler was already known as the author of *Erewhon*, a satirical work in which he had laughed at the foundations of society; also he had had pictures hung. How, then, could anybody be expected to take him seriously as a biologist, least of all? How could a scientist whose livelihood and reputation depended on the maintenance of the belief that science was so extraordinarily difficult and technical that nobody who had not spent his life at it could be expected to do more than acquaint himself with its elements?

His Levity.

Butler's humour, moreover, told terribly against him. It is very difficult to take anybody seriously who insists on making jokes, if only because the jokes suggest that he does not take himself seriously. On the contrary, it is generally assumed that if a man is really convinced about anything, his convictions must assume a certain degree of portentousness when he comes to express them, an assumption to which, it must be admitted, the literary productions of most earnest people lend considerable countenance. There seems to be a natural inability to recognise the truth that, whether a writer writes boringly or amusingly depends, not upon whether he is

in earnest or whether he is joking, but upon whether he is a boring or an amusing person. When he is ironical, as Butler was, the disinclination to take his work seriously is based upon a more solid foundation, since the sensitive organ of self-esteem, alive to the faintest hint of ridicule or abuse, rallies to the defence of its owner by assuring him that the fancied slight cannot possibly be meant for him, or that, if it is, it cannot be meant seriously. It is assumed to be obvious that the man who calls the reader a fool either does not mean it or, if he does, is a fool himself.

It may be noticed in passing that this natural disinclination to take an ironist seriously has operated even more strongly against Butler's great disciple Shaw. The belief that Shaw is a jester who stands on his head to make us laugh has blinded us to the fact that he is a reformer whose object is to make us blush as a preliminary to inducing us to think; and it is only in quite recent years that the decline of Shaw's great comic gift—a decline which, as he himself tells us, is due to advancing age—by allowing his plays to become dull enough to be taken seriously, has opened the eyes of the public to the fact that he is a prophet and a philosopher.

His Refusal to be Technical.

The disapprobation aroused by Butler's want of technical terms cuts rather deeper. Butler deliberately avoided the use of scientific terminology because he represented, or professed to

represent the man in the street. In this *rôle* he made it his business to profess what he, in fact, believed—that there was nothing peculiar or unique about science to countenance a conspiracy to make it a mystery to the man in the street. Science, in fact, for Butler was just organised common sense, and as such, should be readily intelligible to any person of common sense who took the trouble to understand it. The hostility which such an attitude would be likely to arouse among scientists can be easily imagined. Butler wounded the scientists in two of their most important members, their economics and their morals. All professional people exist by maintaining a close vested interest in their profession. If they are manual workers they call themselves a Trade Union, and regard any person outside the union who poaches on the union's preserves as a potential blackleg. If they are doctors and lawyers they have a similar antipathy to outsiders, but abuse them under a different name; they are not blacklegs, but quacks and charlatans. Depending as they do upon their technical knowledge for their livelihood, members of the professions cannot afford to admit successful competition by persons not possessing that knowledge. If persons who do not possess the necessary diplomas and credentials of the profession aspire, and aspire successfully, to do what the professional does, the latter's special knowledge will lose its market value and, as a result, his livelihood will be threatened. Hence the opposition of the medical profession to such a man as Barker, the bone-

setter. It was not that the profession denied the efficacy of his methods or regretted their success, but they did deprecate the performance by an outsider of mysteries to which only the initiated should aspire. When an outsider can do well what the insider does badly, the result not only reflects badly upon the insider, but diminishes the value and importance of being an insider at all.

Now Butler's relation to the scientists was very like Dr. Barker's relation as a successful bonesetter to the medical profession; he pooh-poohed all the mysteries of their trade and, with nothing to aid him but the deft pen of the literary expert and a vast fund of common sense, set out to storm their innermost strongholds. From the very outset he set all the scientists by the ears. As might have been expected, the average scientist regarded him as a sort of intellectual blackleg, and he adopted this attitude not only because Butler's activities threatened his livelihood, but also because they cheapened his reputation, or at least they would have done so, had he been imprudent enough to take any notice of them, and a scientist's reputation is not less precious because more tender than a workman's wages. It is a reputation based largely on mystery and nourished by technicalities, and Butler, who had the impudence to deny the mystery and dispense with the technicalities, paid for his temerity by obscurity and neglect.

But it was not only in their economics—for most professionalism is based in the long run on economics—that the scientists were wounded;

they were shocked in an even more important member, their moral sense. There were certain canons of taste, a fastidiousness, even a snobbishness, if the reader wishes to be uncharitable, against which Butler offended. The scientist who takes his science seriously does not like to see others take it lightly; still less does he like others to laugh at him for taking it seriously himself. Yet Butler did both of these things. He "introduced himself," as Professor Hartog puts it, "as what we now call the man in the street, far too bare of scientific clothing to satisfy the Mrs. Grundy of the domain: lacking all recognised tools of science and all sense of the difficulties in his way, he proceeded to tackle the problems of science . . ." This was bad enough, but there was worse to follow; and this was nothing more nor less than Butler's habit, a habit which grew on him as he grew older, of making fun of those who found the difficulties difficult. Not content with dispensing with technicalities, he was for ever twitting the scientists about their own portentousness of expression, a portentousness which he seems to have regarded as merely a device for concealing obscurity of thought. Huxley, for instance, in an article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, had described a creature as an "organism which . . . must be classified among fishes." What, said Butler, does this mean if it does not mean that the creature is a fish? That Huxley should write "organism which . . . must be classified among fishes" when he meant fish, was a source of inexhaustible entertainment to

Butler, which was not by any means diminished when he came upon another sentence of Huxley's, in which that eminent scientist prided himself and his fellow scientists on their having "an ineradicable tendency to making things clear." The organism which was "classified among fishes" and "the ineradicable tendency to making things clear," are constantly cropping up in Butler's works. He could not get over them; there they were ready to his hand, and, whenever he is at a loss for a gibe at the scientists, he uses them accordingly.

In *Erewhon* we hear of a student who was ploughed at the College of Unreason "for want of sufficient vagueness in his saving clauses paper." "Another was sent down for having written an article on a scientific subject without having made free enough use of the words 'carefully,' 'patiently,' and 'earnestly.'"

Nor was Butler unconscious of the reason, at which we have already hinted, for the scientists' professional addiction to technical terminology. "Do not," he says at the end of *Unconscious Memory*, "let him" (*i.e.* the reader) "be too much cast down by the bad language with which professional scientists obscure the issue, nor by their seeming to make it their business to fog us under the pretence of removing our difficulties. It is not the rat catcher's interest to catch all the rats; and, as Handel observed so sensibly, 'every professional gentleman must do his best for to live.'"

Scientists, in fact, are deliberately obscure be-

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cause they find it pays them. This sort of thing was not calculated to endear ; on the contrary it was downright insulting.

His Irony.

And then, of course, there was Butler's irony. You never could tell when he was being serious and when he was laughing up his sleeve. This sort of thing is very embarrassing in a writer, and Butler could hardly blame men of learning if, to hide their embarrassment, they treated him as a joke. If you cannot be sure whether a man is in earnest or whether he is merely pulling your leg, the safest course is to proceed on the assumption that he is pulling your leg ; you are less likely to be made to look foolish.

And when it was found that many of Butler's most serious arguments appeared in his most ironical works, there was every justification for not taking them too seriously. Take, for instance, Butler's famous argument for personal identity between parents and offspring. There is in *Erewhon* a striking piece of satire on Victorian Puritanism. Butler invents a philosopher, a sort of Moses, on very intimate terms with the Almighty, who prohibits the eating of the flesh of animals on the ground that, since the killing of men is wrong and since there is no difference in kind between a human and an animal organism, the killing of animals is also wrong. It followed that the only animals which might be eaten were those which had died a natural death, or, in other words, those which were aged or diseased.

The Erewhonian Moses is followed in due course by a second philosopher, who extends the principle laid down by his predecessor to embrace vegetable life. Arguments are brought forward, much as in Butler's biological works, to prove that there is no radical difference between the animal and the vegetable world. The members of each exhibit purposiveness in behaviour, personal identity with their parents, and memory of what they did in the persons of their parents. "Did the rose-seed," asked the philosopher, "ever form part of the identity of the rosebud on which it grew? Who can say that it did not? Again I ask: Was the rose-bush ever linked by all those links we commonly consider as constituting personal identity from the seed from which it in its turn grew? Who can say that it was not? Thus, if rose-seed number two is a continuation of the personality of its parent rose-bush, and if that rose-bush is a continuation of the personality of the rose-seed from which it sprang, rose-seed number two must also be a continuation of the personality of the earlier rose-seed, . . . and so back and back *ad infinitum*."

The inference is that, since the vegetable world is not ultimately to be distinguished from the animal world, arguments which are valid against killing and eating animals are equally valid against killing and eating vegetables. This *reductio ad absurdum* of the arguments of his predecessor was, Butler hints, deliberately designed by the second philosopher to thrust the

Erewhonians into an impossible position. Either they had to consent to slow starvation, or they had to sacrifice logic to common sense and give up their puritanical abstention from eating what they liked. A pretty piece of irony and very effective against the Puritans! Yes, but what of Butler's biological argument? Here were all his pet theories—purpose, unconscious memory, continuing identity and the rest—slipped into an obviously ironical piece of writing against Puritans in general, and people who are led by the nose by philosophers and cranks in particular. Were not the arguments, then, as ironical as the conclusions they were used to establish? There was much excuse for thinking so, and for refusing to take them seriously when they turned up again in the biological works.

Butler, in fact, flitted so rapidly from earnestness to irony that it was not always easy to detect the transition. He embarks on a train of thought with perfect seriousness, and passes imperceptibly into ironical applications, and, contrariwise, he begins ironically and lapses into earnestness.

Thus *The Way of All Flesh* contains several passages of sound Utilitarianism purporting to show that virtue is meaningless except in terms of happiness. This was a favourite theme of Butler's, and, with characteristic impudence, he proceeds to show that the world, for all its profession to the contrary, really agrees with him. "Virtue," he says, "springs from man's experience concerning his own well-being, and this,

though not infallible, is still the least fallible thing we have. . . . The world has long ago settled that morality and virtue are what bring men peace at the last. 'Be virtuous,' says the copy-book, 'and you will be happy.' Surely if a reputed virtue fails often in this respect, it is only an insidious form of vice, and if a reputed vice brings no very serious mischief in a man's later years, it is not so bad a vice as it is said to be." A serious expression, this, of a profound conviction, and to be taken accordingly! But in the very next paragraph we find Butler, who is at his favourite game of parent baiting, using his doctrine ironically to administer reproof as follows: "I submit as the result of my own poor observation, that a good deal of unkindness and selfishness on the part of parents towards children is not generally followed by ill-consequences to the parents themselves. They may cast a gloom over their children's lives for many years without having to suffer anything that will hurt them. I should say, then, that it shows no great moral obliquity on the part of parents if, within certain limits, they make their children's lives a burden to them."

An instance of the opposite process of irony subsiding imperceptibly into straightforward seriousness may be taken from *Erewhon*. The chief pursuits of the College of Unreason are the study of "Hypothetics" and of "Unreason." The study of "Hypothetics" is a satire on classical education. The object of education is not to instruct the young in the nature of the real

world—they will find that out for themselves—but to open their eyes to the possibilities of what might arise in an unreal world. “To imagine a set of utterly strange and impossible contingencies, and require the youths to give intelligent answers to the questions that arise therefrom, is reckoned the fittest conceivable way of preparing them for the actual conduct of their affairs in after life.” With this object they are taught hypothetical languages composed in a different state of civilisation and long since superseded. So far so good; Butler’s chuckles up his sleeve are sufficiently audible! But when, on the next page, he proceeds to the study of “Unreason,” which he recommends on the ground that there is no inconsistency so glaring but that those expert in “Unreason” can defend it, we find that his chief argument in its favour expresses one of his most cherished beliefs. Butler had always held—it was part of his case against professionals and parents—that the strict application of logic to life reduces life to absurdity; he hated logical extremes and loved illogical means, and it is precisely on this very ground, seriously and even fiercely maintained, that he now proceeds to praise Unreason. “Life,” he says, “would be intolerable if men were to be guided in all they did by reason and reason only. Reason betrays men into the drawing of hard and fast lines, and to the defining by language—language being like the sun which rears and then scorches. . . . There are no follies and no unreasonableness so great as those which can apparently be irrefragably

defended by reason itself, and there is hardly an error into which men may not easily be led if they base their conduct on reason only." Now, Butler really meant this, yet it is wrapped up in such a parcel of irony that his readers might easily be forgiven for supposing that he did not; and if readers could be misled, how much more could scientists, simple folk who are more easily to be taken in than the generality of mankind.

The most striking instance of the bewildering effect of Butler's irony is, however, afforded by his book *The Fair Haven*. *The Fair Haven*, written when Butler was at the height of his powers, is an attack upon Christianity, and is designed to show first, that the pivot on which the whole Christian dogma turns is the historical fact of the Resurrection, and secondly, that the evidence for the Resurrection, as given in the New Testament, does not hold water. The form of the book is elaborately ironical. It purports to have been written by an imaginary person, John Pickard Owen, recently deceased, whose brother, William Bickersteth Owen, contributes a prefatory memoir. Owen writes as a reformed sceptic, who has been reconverted to Christianity by a study of the evidence for the Resurrection, and wishes to place his experiences at the disposal of the unconverted. On the surface, therefore, the book professes to prove that Christ died on the Cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Butler's irony consists in making the author unconsciously disprove the very thing that he thinks

he is proving. But so detailed is the exposition, so seriously and quietly reasonable are the arguments, so delicate and elaborate the irony which underlies them, so elusive the real meaning, that the great bulk of Butler's contemporaries took the book seriously. A certain Canon Ainger even "sent it to a friend whom he wished to convert." Butler was compelled to bring out a second edition under his own name, with a preface in which he made it clear that the book was intended to be ironical. *The Fair Haven* is extraordinarily symptomatic of Butler's elusive mentality. The irony, though all-pervasive, is never obvious—the most ridiculous passage in the book is the sentence, "He, therefore, to my mother's inexpressible grief, joined the Baptists, and was immersed in a pond near Dorking,"—and, although the general purport of the book is sufficiently plain to-day, it would be a task of the utmost difficulty to summarise clearly and directly Butler's case against the evidence for the Resurrection.

There really was some excuse, then, for thinking not only that Butler scarcely knew when he was being serious and when he was not, but also that he scarcely cared. The difference between belief and unbelief, between assertion and denial, did not seem to be marked for him, as it was for most men, by a clear cut and permanent line. Sceptical about most things, he was sceptical about intensity of belief. "Each individual member" (of the Church) "should only be hot in striving to be as lukewarm as possible," Ernest concludes

in *The Way of All Flesh*, and it is in the same vein that Butler tells us at the end of the same book, that "Ernest takes the Sacrament once a year as a sop to Nemesis, lest he should again feel strongly on any subject. It rather fatigues him, but 'no man's opinions,' he sometimes says, 'can be worth holding unless he knows how to deny them easily and gracefully upon occasion in the cause of charity.'" Here, at the conclusion of Butler's most substantial work, we may feel with some justification that we are reading his final comment upon intolerance, pedantry and professionalism of all kinds. In addition, then, to his other offences, Butler was, it appeared, a general sceptic who carried his scepticism to the point of hardly seeming to care whether he himself was believed or not.

Having proceeded thus far with our enumeration of the reasons why the scientists disliked and neglected Butler, we are now in a position to consider why Butler was so cross with the scientists. We may divide our treatment here into two parts. There is first the special question of Butler's spleen and of the way in which it expressed itself in his controversy with the professional biologists; and secondly, there is the question of his attack upon professionalism of all kinds.

II

ATTITUDE OF BUTLER TOWARDS THE SCIENTISTS

His Biological Controversy.

In view of the space already allotted to the biological controversy in the preceding chapter, our treatment here must be brief.

(i.) Butler accused Darwin, Weismann and Wallace of slighting and neglecting their illustrious predecessors, Buffon, Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck, borrowing from them without acknowledging the debt, and ignoring himself when he drew attention to their claims.

To take an example, Darwin writes of Buffon, who, in Butler's view, had a permanent claim "to be considered as the father of the modern doctrine of evolution," as follows: "The first author who in modern times has treated evolution in a scientific spirit was Buffon. But, as his opinions fluctuated greatly at different periods, and as he does not enter on the causes or means of the transformation of species, I need not here enter on details."

On this Butler wrote his *Evolution Old and New*, which largely consists of a comparison between the theories of Buffon, Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck, on the one hand, and of Charles Darwin, on the other, and in which the older biologists are used as a stick with which to beat the illustrious author of the *Origin of Species*. In the book Butler shows, among other things, (a) that it is

absurd to call Buffon scientific while at the same time asserting that he does not enter on the causes and means of transformation, (*b*) that this assertion is entirely false since Buffon is continually treating of this very matter, and (*c*) that, in enunciating the view that variations are sometimes fortuitous,—Buffon speaks of them as making their appearance “by some chance common enough with Nature,”—Buffon was anticipating Charles Darwin himself, and laying his successor under a debt which he had persistently failed to acknowledge.

Evolution Old and New appeared in 1879, and Butler naturally expected Darwin to take some notice of it. He did, but in a manner which enraged Butler. What actually happened is obscure, but Butler's account of the facts as given in *Unconscious Memory* is as follows: Darwin had published about this time a book dealing with the life and work of his grandfather, entitled *Life of Erasmus Darwin*. In the preface Darwin referred to an article on his grandfather by a Dr. Ernest Krause, which had appeared in a German scientific journal, *Kosmos*, in February, 1879. This article was cited by Darwin as explaining and reviving the purposive attitude to evolution which was attributed to Erasmus Darwin, and was then made the occasion of a general criticism of the teleological (*i.e.*, Butler's) view of evolution. Butler looked up Dr. Krause's original article, found that it contained no such criticism, and deduced, no doubt rightly, that, during the period between the first appearance of

the article and its translation into English some months later, Dr. Krause had read his own book, *Evolution Old and New*, which had appeared in the interval, and interpolated in the English translation of the article some of *his*, Butler's, conclusions with the object of attacking them.

He deduced further—but whether rightly or wrongly we shall never know—that Darwin knew of this interpolation, that he, nevertheless, in his preface palmed off the article which had been modified after the appearance of Butler's book as the original article, and that he did so because he thought Butler's conclusions to be sufficiently important to require refutation, but, being afraid to come out and meet him in the open, desired to criticise them covertly on the false pretext of their having appeared in Dr. Krause's original article.

Butler wrote personally to Darwin asking for an explanation, received a reply which entirely failed to satisfy him, and communicated with the *Athenæum*, giving a full statement of the facts as he understood them. Darwin took no notice of the letter to the *Athenæum*, nor, indeed, did he further notice Butler at any time, and the reviewers and literary men maintained an equal silence. Butler was left in possession of the field, but his victory was a barren one. He roundly asserted that there was a conspiracy to suppress him and, in suppressing him, to ignore the claims of Erasmus Darwin and Buffon, and to exalt the much-belauded Charles Darwin. In an outburst of righteous spleen he concludes: "From ladies

and gentlemen of science I admit that I have no expectations. There is no conduct so dishonourable that people will not deny it, or explain it away, if it has been committed by one whom they recognise as of their own persuasion. It must be remembered that facts cannot be respected by the scientist in the same way as by other people. It is his business to familiarise himself with facts, and, as we all know, the path from familiarity to contempt is an easy one."

His Attack on the Scientists.

But this was only the beginning of Butler's attack. He now proceeded to draw up a more general indictment containing the following specific charges. Scientists were guilty of refusing to attend to plain evidence, of maintaining their own point of view in the face of it, of making admissions through sheer stupidity or dishonesty which gave away the whole of the case they maintained, and from time to time of tacitly admitting his and Hering's views without acknowledging them or abating one jot of the hostility they openly avowed towards them.

We will take an instance this time from the behaviour of Weismann, to whom we have already referred in connection with the experiments of M. Brown Sequard on guinea pigs. It is clear that, if the validity of these experiments be admitted, Weismann's contention that the germ cell remains unaffected by events occurring to the bodily organism of the parent must go by the board. What, then, does Weismann do ?

He begins by discrediting the evidence. After speaking of the necessity of subjecting such evidence to rigid criticism as to the precautions taken, the conclusions observed, the nature and number of the experiments, and so forth, he proceeds (speaking specifically of Brown Sequard): "Up to the present time such necessary conditions have not been sufficiently observed." A little later on, however, he says that the experiments have been repeated by one, Obersteiner, "who has described them in a very exact and unprejudiced manner," and concludes that "the facts cannot be doubted." He then proceeds to point out that, if artificial mutilations spontaneously reappear in offspring with sufficient frequency to exclude possibilities of chance, then the inheritance of acquired characteristics must be admitted, but concludes that "all the supposed instances have broken down when carefully examined." But what about Obersteiner and the facts that could not be doubted?

Butler could make nothing of this, and proceeds to infer stupidity or dishonesty, reinforcing his inferences by showing with copious references, first, that Weismann denied the inheritance of acquired characteristics; secondly, that he agreed that, if occasional transmission could be proved, the doctrine of Lamarck would be powerfully supported; and thirdly, that he admitted that mutilations are acquired characteristics which "might occasionally be transmitted."

Darwin himself had given many instances of the apparent transmission of acquired character-

istics, although, as we have seen, he thought that such transmission was not the *main* cause of variations. Weismann exhibits great respect for Darwin, and ranks himself a neo-Darwinian. Nevertheless, he dismisses Darwin's examples with a wave of the hand, and declares that "the transmission of mutilations may be dismissed into the domain of fable."

At this Butler breaks out in exasperation. "What is the use of science at all if the conclusions of a man as competent as I readily admit Mr. Darwin to have been, on the evidence laid before him from countless sources, are to be set aside lightly and without giving the clearest and most cogent explanation of the why and wherefore? When we see a person 'ostrichising' the evidence which he has to meet, as clearly as I believe Professor Weismann to be doing, we shall in nine cases out of ten be right in supposing that he knows the evidence to be too strong for him."

Similarly with regard to Butler's own views. His opponents were always giving away their own case, and giving him his, while maintaining a conspiracy of complete silence with regard to all that he and Hering had written. Even Hering himself seemed afraid of his theory after he had once enunciated it. Why? Butler really did not know, unless it was that Hering, like other people, was ashamed of it. "Every one," he says, "except myself seems afraid to open his mouth about it. Of course, the inference suggests itself that other people have more sense than I have. I readily admit it; but why have so many of

our leaders shown such a strong hankering after the theory if there is nothing in it ? ”

“ Is it conceivable,” he asks again, “ that a theory which harmonises so many facts hitherto regarded as without either connection or explanation should not deserve at any rate consideration from those who profess to take an interest in biology ? ”

It was enough to make anybody cross, and cross Butler certainly was. In the end he puts it down to the jealousy of vested interests and to professional hatred of the outsider. He speaks bitterly of “ the manner in which Mr. Darwin had been abetted ” (over the Krause article) “ by those who should have been the first to detect the fallacy which misled him ; of the hotbed of intrigue which science has now become ; of the disrepute into which we English must fall as a nation if such practices as Mr. Darwin had attempted in this case are to be tolerated,” and of the laurels which had been “ filched ” from Buffon and Erasmus Darwin.

But for his final comments upon scientists we must turn to *The Notebooks*, whence, from among a number of highly caustic remarks, we take the following :—

“ It is rarely that scientific blundering, so long as it is confined to theory, entails loss on the blunderer. On the contrary, it very often brings him fame, money and a pension.” Scientists belong to two classes, “ Those who want to know and do not care whether others think they know or not, and those who do not much care about

knowing, but care very greatly about being reputed as knowing." "Science is being daily more and more personified and anthropomorphised into a god. By and by they will say that science took our nature upon him, and sent down his only begotten son, Charles Darwin, or Huxley, into the world so that those who believe in him, etc. ; and they will burn people for saying that science, after all, is only an expression for our ignorance of our own ignorance."

His Attack on Professionalism.

From hatred of professionalism in science it was a natural transition to hatred of professionalism in everything. This hatred, as we have already suggested, pervades all Butler's works : it is one of his most striking points of similarity with Shaw ; and there is no aspect of his many-sided mentality which reappears with more frequency and prominence in Shaw's works. Dr. Paramore's disease in *The Philanderer*, the Rev. Mavor Morell in *Candida*, the doctors in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, and Alexey, the soldier-hero in *Arms and the Man*, are all in their different ways embodiments of a professionalism whose pretensions Shaw derides with a laughter which is a direct inheritance from, when it is not an echo of, Butler's.

When I speak of Butler's attack on "professionalism," I am including within the meaning of that word a number of rather different things which, though born of a common stock, often present very diverse appearances. I can per-

haps most easily sum up in one formula all that professionalism meant for Butler by saying that it was for him the sacrifice of individuals to universals. Scientists sacrificed facts to theories, moralists sacrificed persons to principles, academicians sacrificed beauty to form.

Our treatment of this aspect of Butler's thought falls into two parts.

(i) *The Sacrifice of People to Principles.*

Butler was strongly opposed to the view that actions are right or wrong in themselves; he held with the Utilitarians that their rightness or wrongness can only be assessed in terms of their consequences, and of these consequences the only ones that mattered in practice were happiness and unhappiness.¹ Now professionals of all kinds, especially professional idealists, tend to hold that certain things are good and bad in themselves, just as they hold that certain actions are right or wrong in themselves, and that they are so irrespective of the circumstances in which they occur and the consequences they produce. They will not agree that the same action may sometimes be right and sometimes wrong, or that the same thing may be sometimes good and sometimes bad. Right and wrong, good and bad, are universal and immutable principles; they are never relative or changing. It follows that, when individuals come into conflict with

¹ I shall return to Butler's views on these questions in the next chapter; for the present we are only concerned with their influence on his attitude to professionalism.

these unchanging principles, the individuals must go to the wall. This, from Butler's point of view, was bad enough, but it might have been tolerable if individuals ever do come into conflict with them. But they never do. What individuals meet in practice are the officials who are appointed to uphold them, and the institutions which are presumed to embody them. The former are the members of the professions, and the latter are the barricades which the members of the professions erect to protect themselves.

One or two examples may serve to elucidate the point. It was noticed that mankind were on the whole so incurably energetic that, unless they were more or less forcibly restrained from working every day, they would wear themselves out. Accordingly, man appointed for his own good a day of rest on which he should not work, and further prescribed that it should be every seventh day. Hence the invention of the Sabbath, made, it will be observed, by man in his own interest. Hardly was this beneficent invention perfected when the professionals seized it and set to work to institutionalise it. The Sabbath is God's day, therefore all manner of observances must be kept in His honour; God does not like worldly amusement, therefore it is necessary to be bored in His honour; God has strong objections to any form of work, therefore it may be necessary to starve, as for instance by not gathering ears of corn, in His honour. Hence the institution of the Sabbath, which was made for the good of man, tends to

become more important than man for whom it was made. In the same way the State, made by man for his own use, is formalised by Hegel into a super individual with a real will and personality of its own, to which the individual must in time of need be unhesitatingly sacrificed.

The object of medicine is to heal the sick ; the principles of medicine are the prescribed rules and methods by which the wisdom of the past has shown that the sick can normally be healed. Professionalism, following its usual practice of subordinating individuals to principles, thinks it more important to keep the rules than to heal. "It is better to die through following the rules than to recover through violating them," says Doctor Bahis in *L'Amour Médecin*, and when Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonnington in *The Doctor's Dilemma* is shocked to have to repeat that he has "actually known a man die of a disease from which he was, scientifically speaking, immune," it is at once recognised that he is more concerned at the inconsiderateness of the individual in putting principle out of practice, than at the unexpected death of a patient whom it was his business to keep alive.

These are extreme examples ; it may be that they are caricatures, but they indicate sufficiently clearly the kind of attitude which Butler was never tired of ridiculing. Rules, he held, were made for man ; they should, therefore, be broken whenever it is to man's interest to break them. It is necessary to have rules, certainly ! But rule for rule, one rule is much the same

as another ; and it is just as important to break them on occasions as to keep them on the whole. Provided, therefore, you break them frequently you may have what rules you like, but beware of the professionals who, preferring form to substance, come to rate the rule above the ends it was designed to secure.

(ii) *Truth as Provisional and Relative.*

But there is another element in Butler's hatred of professionalism. To sacrifice men to principles was bad enough ; it was bad even if the principles were infallible. But were they infallible ? Butler was strongly convinced that they were not, not a single one of them. I shall have more to say in the next chapter with regard to Butler's attitude to absolute truths and the so-called immutable principles of Ethics. For the present it will be sufficient to remark the fact that Butler was a thorough-going Pragmatist. There is no evidence that he had read William James—in this as in so much else he anticipated the thought of others, and never knew how popular his ideas were later to become—but there is plenty of evidence to show that, had he read him, he would have found in him a philosopher after his own heart.

Morality must, he held, be judged by its results ; but so must everything, what is true of morality being true also of truth. And since the results are fluctuating and unstable, what produces good results nine times out of ten being the tenth time disastrous, there is no truth that is always true,

just as there is no right that is always right. The most, in fact, that can be said of truth is that it is true on the whole, or true with exceptions, and if an alleged truth does not, as Butler would say, bring a man peace at the last, it is no truth at all, but a fraud.

There is a characteristic passage in *The Way of All Flesh* in which Ernest, who has been endeavouring with much travail to bring to birth a metaphysical system which "should go on all fours under all circumstances," finally comes to the conclusion that no such system is possible. Bishop Berkeley, who had shown long ago that the belief that we only know our own ideas, and that, as a consequence, we can never know of the existence of anything in the Universe except our own ideas,¹ is a belief which cannot be refuted, had made it impossible to find "an incontestable first premise" on which a metaphysical system must of necessity be based.

The discovery that no true metaphysic is possible, but that every system yet promulgated is "liable to be upset at every word and turn," gives Ernest quite as much satisfaction as the metaphysical system he set out to find. And so, as Butler would say, it ought to do. Philosophers who are always grubbing about among ultimates and endeavouring to discover a rational basis for belief, are not in front of their fellows but behind them. From the point of view of evolution they are people who waste their time in directing their consciousness to matters which

¹ He admitted God, but only at the expense of inconsistency.

“with sensible men have already passed into the unconscious stage.” Our business in life is action; and action is impeded by too much speculation as to the end and purpose of action. Thinking about ultimates, or, at any rate, as much of it as is necessary for the purposes of living, was done long ago in the history of the race, and sensible men now do it unconsciously. The man who devotes his energies to searching for ultimate truth is like a man who turns his attention to circulating his blood. Each is wasting his time in doing consciously what he ought to be doing automatically.

This attitude to absolute principles, whether of truth or morality, is applied by Butler in every sphere of life. It is continually cropping up in the most unexpected fashion in *The Way of All Flesh*. If no truth is always true, but is always liable to exception, we naturally want to know what the exceptions are and how to detect them. “That,” Ernest reflects, “was a difficult matter; there were so many, and the rules which governed them were sometimes so subtle, that mistakes always had been and always would be made; it was just this that made it impossible to reduce life to an exact science.” There were rough-and-ready rules both as to truths and as to their exceptions, but there was always a residue of cases “in which decision was difficult—so difficult that a man had better follow his instinct than attempt to decide them by any process of reasoning.”

What are the consequences? The most important is that what a man believes matters little;

what does matter is the way in which he believes it. If he is reasonably accommodating about his beliefs, if he is inconsistent on occasion, if, above all, he is tolerant of other beliefs, well and good. But if not, if he claims for his belief absolute truth and makes things uncomfortable for those who do not hold it, then he is no gentleman. Ernest saw "that it matters little what profession, whether of religion or of irreligion, a man makes, provided only he follows it out with charitable inconsistency and without insisting on it to the bitter end. It is in the uncompromisingness with which dogma is held, and not in the dogma or want of dogma, that the danger lies."

And, if he is no gentleman, then he is for Butler's purposes a professional. Professionals, that is to say, professional teachers, pastors, and masters, are people who claim absolute validity for their own highly disputable views and turn a deliberately blind eye to the evidence that gainsays them. But at this point we become involved in a complication. In the beginning, it is true, the blind eye is turned deliberately, because the salaries and position of the professionals depend upon their not letting others refute them; they simply cannot afford to admit the existence of what would make their function superfluous and their profession a living lie. Hence, as Butler puts it, "a conspiracy of silence about things whose truth would be immediately apparent to disinterested inquirers is not only tolerable, but righteous, on the part of those who profess to be and take

money for being *par excellence* guardians and teachers of truth.”

But the eye which is deliberately shut for professional purposes is soon permanently closed for all purposes. You have only to turn a blind eye to what you don't like sufficiently often to become *bonâ fide* incapable of seeing it.

During his convalescence in prison Ernest reviews at length, and with an open mind, the arguments for the Resurrection. As an ex-clergyman, he convinces himself that they will not hold water, but would he, he wonders, have been convinced if he were still a clergyman? “What should he have done, he asked himself, if he had not made his present discovery till years later, when he was more deeply committed to the life of a clergyman? Should he have had the courage to face it, or would he not more probably have evolved some excellent reason for continuing to think as he had thought hitherto?” Probably he would. How else was he to explain the apparent blindness of eminent educational authorities to evidence, or rather to a lack of it, which seemed to him plain? Of Archbishop Whately, for instance? The Archbishop had written a celebrated book called *Historic Doubts*, which purports to show that there never was such a person as Napoleon, and then satirises the arguments of those who throw doubt on the Christian miracles. Ernest, recently ordained, tackles Mr. Shaw, the free-thinking tinker, with *Historic Doubts*. What did he think of it? “‘If you really want to know,’ said Mr. Shaw, with a

sly twinkle, 'I think that he who was so willing and able to prove that what was was not would be equally able and willing to make a case for thinking that what was not was, if it suited his purpose.' Ernest was very much taken back. How was it that all the clever people at Cambridge had never put him up to this simple rejoinder? The answer is easy: they did not develop it for the same reason that a hen had never developed webbed feet—that is to say, because they did not want to do so. . . . 'You see,' continued Mr. Shaw, 'these writers all get their living by writing in a certain way, and the more they write in that way, the more likely they are to go on. You should not call them dishonest for this any more than a judge should call a barrister dishonest for earning his living by defending one in whose innocence he does not seriously believe; but you should hear the barrister on the other side of the case.' " Or, as Butler has it in *The Note-books* when apologising for the devil, "It must be remembered that we have heard only one side of the case. God has written all the books."

Mr. Shaw puts the case in a nutshell. Professional people deceive us not deliberately, but unconsciously, because they deceive themselves; and they deceive themselves because not only their salary, but their very *raison d'être*, depend upon their doing so.

Proceeding on the basis of this conception, and bearing in mind the professional tendency, already described, to sacrifice men to institutions and people to principles, a tendency springing from

the same erroneous belief in absolute truth and absolute right, we shall find Butler's outbursts against professionals and professionalism more readily intelligible than they are apt to be at a first reading. I will select a few at random, beginning with those arch professionals parents, schoolmasters, and parsons, whose complacencies are Butler's chief quarry in *The Way of all Flesh*.

Professionalism in Parents.

Professionalism is particularly odious in parents, because their victims are so completely at their mercy. In virtue of his superior age and power the parent holds all the cards, and he plays them in such a way as to represent himself as a compendium of all the virtues and his children as imps of wickedness. Actuated solely by the best motives he has brought his children into the world as his children, thereby placing them eternally in his debt. They become further indebted to his care and affection for being fed and clothed, for having conferred upon them the inestimable benefits of the Christian religion—Theobald even went so far as to have Ernest baptised in water from the Jordan—for receiving a sound moral training, and for having the heavy expenses of a first-class education defrayed for them. How do they repay him? By shameless ingratitude. They are thoughtless, troublesome and self-willed; in spite of all the money which has been spent on them, they insist on turning out badly, and they seem unconscious of their good fortune in having secured their own parents for

their parents, when they might so easily have gone farther and fared worse.

Thus the whole function of the parent in his professional capacity is to impress upon the child a sense of his own sin and of his parent's virtue. "To parents who wish to lead a quiet life I would say, Tell your children that they are very naughty—much naughtier than most children. Point to the young people of some acquaintance as models of perfection, and impress your own children with a deep sense of their own inferiority. . . . This is called moral influence and will enable you to bounce them as much as you please. They think you know and they will not have yet caught you lying often enough to suspect that you are not the unworldly truthful person which you represent yourself to be. Tell them how singularly indulgent you are. . . . Say that you have their highest interests at stake whenever you are out of temper and wish to make yourself unpleasant by way of balm to your soul. Harp much upon these highest interests. . . . You hold all the trump cards, or, if you do not, you can filch them; if you play them with anything like judgment, you will find yourselves heads of happy, united, God-fearing families, even as did my old friend, Mr. Pontifex. True, your children will find out all about it some day, but not until too late to be of much service to them or inconvenience to yourself."

In Schoolmasters.

The professional ball is taken up and kept on

the bounce by schoolmasters. They are in a position of even greater authority than parents; true, it is diffused over a larger area, but the opportunities of self-glorification are more pronounced, and like the parents, they hold all the cards.

The portrait of Dr. Skinner, of Roughborough, in *The Way of All Flesh*, is one of Butler's finest pieces of satire. The passage in which he begins by disclaiming all desire for supper relents so far as to say "Stay—I may presently take a glass of cold water—and a small piece of bread and butter," and finally makes away with "a good plate of oysters, a scallop shell of minced veal nicely browned, some apple tart and a hunk of bread and cheese" washed down with hot gin and water, is in its way as delicious as Dr. Skinner's supper. Dr. Skinner had a great reputation among theologians for his *Meditations upon the Epistle and Character of St. Jude*; there was a "deeper and more hidden meaning" in his lightest utterances, so that "'bread and butter' was Skinnerese for oyster patties and apple tart, and 'gin hot' the true translation of water," and he was enormously successful as a headmaster. And then, having played delicately with him for two pages, Butler breaks out against him as a professional of the deepest dye. "Could it be expected to enter into the head of such a man as this that in reality he was making his money by corrupting youth; that it was his paid profession to make the worse appear the better reason in the eyes of those who were too young and inexperienced to be able to find him out; that he kept

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out of sight of those whom he professed to teach material points of the argument, for the production of which they had a right to rely on the honour of anyone who made professions of sincerity; that . . ."; but there is really no end to the crimes of Dr. Skinner.

In Clergymen.

I have already touched incidentally upon so many instances of clerical professionalism, that little need be added under this head. Clergymen are for Butler the arch professionals. The primary fact about a clergyman is that his livelihood depends upon his holding certain opinions. He takes these opinions for better or for worse when he is ordained, and is tied to them ever after. As a consequence he must either forego change and development or become a hypocrite. Either course is disastrous. Change and development are for Butler an essential part of the being of any organism. If they are prohibited, or if, which comes to the same thing, the organism prohibits them to itself, it suffers from all the evils of forcibly arrested growth. Not only is the clergyman prohibited from thinking freely but he may not act freely. "The clergyman is expected to be a kind of human Sunday. Things must not be done in him which are venial in the week day classes. He is paid for the business of leading a stricter life than other people. It is his *raison d'être*."

Hence, clergymen are people whose natural growth has in every direction been stopped;

their minds are atrophied and their lives are starved. For this reason the cashiers of the Musical Banks in *Erewhon* are described as lacking "the true Erewhonian frankness; and an equal number from any other class would have looked happier and better men. When I met them in the streets they did not seem like other people, but had, as a general rule, a cramped expression upon their faces which pained and puzzled me." Hence, too, the dullness of clergymen, their stupidity and the unhappiness of their homes, where they privately revenge themselves upon the community for demanding of them an impossible standard of conduct in public, and at the same time find an outlet for their thwarted desires by bullying their offspring. For this occupation they have exceptional opportunities, since their poor wretches of children can never get away from fathers who, alone among male parents, have no official place of business outside the home.

If, however, the clergyman insists, in spite of all deterrents, on changing, he impales himself on the other horn of his dilemma by becoming a hypocrite. He can hardly help doing this in any event, since it is natural for him to want to be rich and prosper in this world, while his religion exhorts him to poverty and obscurity. Even the cashiers of the Musical Banks would feel grossly insulted if they were asked to receive their salaries in any other currency than that of this world, notwithstanding the fact that their profession requires them to despise the currency of

this world. Theobald, too, is excused, on the grounds of the innate hypocrisy proper to his profession, from noticing the anxious jaded look which his continual spying has produced on Ernest; "It was his profession to know how to shut his eyes to things that were inconvenient—no clergyman could keep his benefice for a month if he could not do this"; and, from having practised this necessary blindness for many years, he was now "little likely to see anything that he thought it more convenient not to see, unless he was made to do so."

In Writers.

Butler could not abide fine writing, and had small patience with the current belief that there was some professional mystery about the author's craft, which the uninitiated must learn before they could hope to essay it. Style seemed to him a mere affectation, and he resolutely refused to believe that the object of writing was any other than the conveyance of meaning; "good writing" it certainly was not, the only kind of writing which Butler was prepared to call good being that which conveyed meaning as clearly and as rapidly as possible.

This antipathy to literature as such comes out very early. Thus Mr. Festing Jones quotes a passage from an article "On English Composition and Other Matters," contributed by Butler while still at Cambridge to a College magazine, in which he says, "Most readers will have anticipated me in admitting that a man should be clear

of his meaning before he endeavours to give it any kind of utterance, and that, having made up his mind what to say, the less thought he takes how to say it more than briefly, pointedly and plainly, the better."

It is in *The Notebooks*, however, that Butler gives full vent to his impatience with literary professionalism. "I never knew a writer yet who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable. . . . Men like Newman and R. L. Stevenson seem to have taken pains to acquire what they called a style as a preliminary measure—as something that they had to form before their writings could be of any value. I should like to put it on record that I never took the smallest pains with my style, have never thought about it, and do not know or want to know whether it is a style or whether it is not, as I believe and hope, just common simple straightforwardness. I cannot conceive how any man can take thought for his style without loss to himself and his readers." He goes on characteristically to add, "I have, however, taken all the pains that I had the patience to endure in the improvement of my handwriting. . . ."

Butler was provoked to this outburst by the contemporary attitude to literature adopted by men like Pater and Wilde. Provided the expression was beautiful, "æsthetically satisfying" they would have said, the character and quality of what was expressed was for them a matter of secondary importance. What was more, you could not, in their view, really distinguish the

thought from the expression, not because the thought dictated the expression, but because the expression compelled the thought. The style, in fact, was the man, in the sense that it made the man what he was ; it was the essence of his being, the citadel of his personality ; he was that sort of person because he wrote in that particular kind of manner, and the thoughts and ideas that he expressed were a comparatively incidental and irrelevant corollary of his being that sort of person. "To have a style," said Remy de Gourmont, "is to speak in the midst of the common language a peculiar dialect, unique and inimitable, yet so constituted as to be at once the language of all and the language of an individual." Individuality, that is to say, consists in the form of expression, not in the substance expressed. Butler was justly impatient of this sort of talk. It was substance for him that mattered, not form. Style was only form, a mere vehicle for expressing meaning, erected into fictitious importance by those who had nothing to say. "A man's style in any art," he wrote, "should be like his dress—it should attract as little attention as possible."

In order to show his contempt for style Butler would go deliberately out of his way to flout the accepted canons of good writing and shock the stylists for the sheer fun of the thing. In his essay, *A Mediæval Girl's School*, he discourses amusedly on the subject of straining at gnats and swallowing camels. He has noticed, he says, "that there is no such effectual means of de-

veloping the power to swallow camels as incessant watchfulness for opportunities of straining at gnats," and he has, therefore, made "it a rule to earnestly and patiently and carefully swallow¹ a few of the smallest gnats I can find several times a day, as the best astringent for the throat I know of."

It is in the same vein of revolt from the conventional conception of the literary man, with his style, his craft of letters, and his library, the instrument of his craft, that Butler tells us that he does not like books. "I believe," he says, "I have the smallest library of any literary man in London, and I have no wish to increase it. I keep my books at the British Museum and at Mudie's. *Webster's Dictionary*, *Whitaker's Almanack* and *Bradshaw's Railway Guide* should be sufficient for any ordinary library."

The influence of Butler has unconsciously effected a great revolution in this matter of style. He took the iridescent bubble of the 'art for art's sake' school and squeezed it firmly and decisively; and, with Shaw to succeed him, put fine writing for its own sake out of court in England for a full dozen years. While we are on the point, it is only fair to add that Butler's own style is an excellent practical demonstration of his precepts. It is extraordinarily simple and lucid, quaint sometimes, but not self-consciously quaint, and never obtrudes eccentricity to the extent of obscuring meaning. There is never the slightest doubt about what Butler means. His meaning is as

¹ My italics.

plain and often as unpalatable as a pikestaff. The style that results, albeit a little lacking in warmth and colour, and with an effect at times somewhat arid and over-bracing as of an east wind, is nevertheless wonderfully cool and invigorating to those whose tastes are not too spoiled by a literary diet of highly spiced decadents and effervescent romanticists, to enable them to get health and refreshment from an occasional draught of fresh, spring water.

As for originality, biology had taught Butler that nothing could come out of nothing, and that everything was, therefore, a slightly more developed form of something else. "Ideas," he said, "no less than human beings in whose minds they arise, must be begotten by parents not very unlike themselves. Life is like a fugue; everything must grow out of the subject, and there must be nothing new." This being so, the way to achieve originality is not to seek for it, but to study something that you like and admire, note down whatever crosses your mind in reference to it, and so by crossing it with yourself to produce a blend to which each has contributed. Butler then proceeds to commit a breach of professional etiquette by giving away professional secrets. Having disposed of the originality myth, he goes on to disclose to those wishing to write the secret of "a little note-book kept always in the waistcoat pocket," in which to jot down whatever strikes one whether in study or relaxation.

This was the method which Butler himself

followed, and *The Notebooks* are the consequence. A thought commercial and commonplace, perhaps? Possibly; but materials thus acquired, and not any hocus-pocus about plenary inspiration, are the writer's stock in trade all the same, and the sooner he admits it, the better for the honesty of the profession.

In Artists.

What is true of writers is true of artists. The professional artist is damned, just as the professional writer is damned, the latter by becoming a stylist or a journalist, the former by becoming a Royal Academician, painting the great and flattering the visages of millionaires.

There is an excellent passage in *Erewhon* dealing with the provision of public statues. These were foisted on the public by some clique anxious to push a young, tame artist as a set-off to the pet of a rival clique, or by some rich merchant desirous of finding a job for the young man who was engaged to his daughter. The enormities so begotten became such a public nuisance that the people rose and destroyed with indiscriminate fury all public statues good and bad alike. For a couple of hundred years no statue was made, but "the instinct for having stuffed men and women was so strong that people at length again began to try to make them. Not knowing how to make them, and having no academies to instruct them, the earliest sculptors of this period thought things out for themselves, and again produced works that were full of interest, so that in three or four

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generations they reached a perfection hardly, if at all, inferior to that of several hundred years earlier." Then, however, the old evils recurred; sculptors obtained high prices, the art became a trade, academies sprang up which taught the rules and principles of fine art, pupils flocked to attend them, big business extended its patronage as before, and the statues became so horrible that they had to be broken all over again. This is Butler's interpretation of the maxim that you cannot take the kingdom of beauty by storm, whether your weapons of attack be rules of art or dollars.

In Dons.

Professionalism in professors is one of Butler's favourite targets. Its power and prevalence are founded on the laziness and humility of the average man. "So ingrained in the human heart is the desire to believe that some people really do know what they say they know, and can thus save them the trouble of thinking for themselves," that men are ready to allow persons professing knowledge to lead them by the nose even into positions of the gravest discomfort.

We have already referred to the compulsory introduction of vegetarianism among the Erewhonians, a nation of meat eaters, following a demonstration by a professor to the effect that, since human and animal life were in reality continuous, and since it was considered wrong to take human life, it must also be wrong to take animal life. The Erewhonians suffered under

enforced vegetarianism, varied by law breaking, for seven hundred years, until, as we have seen, a second professor arose to cap the first by demonstrating that, since biological research showed animal and vegetable life to be continuous, and, since it was considered wrong to take animal life, it must also be wrong to take vegetable life. Hence it was the duty of Erewhon to starve. It was not until this duty became plain that the Erewhonians became impatient of their professors and returned to their senses.

As the source of the professor's reputation consists in his professing to know, he must never allow himself to profess not to know. It is the necessity of keeping up this terrible reputation that makes professors so dull. It has three distinct effects. These effects are studied in the professors at the College of Unreason in Erewhon. First it makes them desperately anxious to avoid expressing any opinion for fear of "giving themselves away." Hence the preference of dons for talking about the weather, games or holidays, in which "giving oneself away" is difficult. Secondly, when pressed to express some opinion, it causes them to retail the opinion of some one else who has written on the subject, with, however, the proviso that they are unable to agree with him on many points. To discover what these points are is difficult; to attempt to do so shows bad breeding. Thirdly, "when, wriggle as they may, they find themselves pinned down to some expression of definite opinion, as often as not they will argue in support of what they

perfectly well know to be untrue." Of course, as Butler points out, this does not matter much if you are at liberty always to interpret a professor's arguments in a sense exactly contrary to that which they purport to bear, but as professors have an unfortunate trick of being sincere just when you least expect it, you never really know where you are.

In *Erewhon Revisited* there is an amusing dialogue between two professors, Hanky and Panky, Professors of Worldly and Unworldly Wisdom respectively, in which the professors who are discussing the speeches to be delivered by them at Sunday's dedication of a temple to the Sunchild, set themselves to invent arguments in favour of the divinity in which each professor completely disbelieves. But while both were liars, Hanky, we are told, was the more dangerous, since his "occasional frankness put people off their guard. He was the mere common, superficial, perfunctory professor, who, being a professor, would of course profess, but would not lie more than was in the bond; he was log-rolled and log-rolling but still, in a robust wolfish fashion, human."

The necessity of lying, when complicated by the fear-of-giving-yourself-away disease, is fatal to the intellect. After a few years as a professor "atrophy of the opinions invariably supervened and the sufferer became stone dead to everything except the more superficial aspects of those material objects with which he came most in contact." The repellent expression of those suffer-

ing from the professor's disease is emphasised, and Butler expresses regret that no cure has yet been discovered for it.

It is only fair to mention that Butler had a particular grudge against the professors, just as he had a grudge against the scientists, which made him, perhaps, more uncharitable to them than to most professionals. The disease "of not-giving-themselves-away," the retailing of other people's opinions, the refusal to converse on any but the most trivial subjects, the deliberate misuse of the intellect to make the untrue appear the true cause, these we know well enough. They have been the theme of satirists in every age, and have existed and will continue to exist as long as "academicism," if I may coin the word, in all its forms remains the curse of art and learning. But Butler lays on, if not with too violent, at least with too indiscriminating a hand, and it may be surmised that he shows this peculiar antipathy to professors as such, because he was smarting from the amused contempt with which the academic world treated his theory of the authorship of the *Odyssey*.

The Authorship of the "Odyssey."

As everybody knows, Butler believed that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman, in point of fact by Nausicaa, daughter of Alcinous, who appears in the thirteenth book, and he wrote *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, and followed it up by a lengthy essay, entitled *The Humour of Homer*, to prove his theory.

In these writings, Butler makes out a very good *primâ facie* case for his theory ; he displays a wealth of erudition, shows himself an accomplished scholar, and expounds his views with all the dialectical skill which his long controversy with the biologists had helped him to acquire. His enthusiasm for Homer, moreover, was undoubted. He had studied Greek solely in order to read him in the original ; he had translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* throughout, and made a very good job of it, and he had learned the greater part of both poems by heart. Surely he was entitled at least to have his case answered.

But no answer was forthcoming. Although the authorship of the *Odyssey* was a stock subject of legitimate controversy, the suggestion that one of the greatest poems of antiquity was written by a young woman was obviously too ridiculous to call for serious comment. This being so, the only thing to do was to treat it as a joke ; and as a joke it was treated accordingly. Nobody paid any attention to Butler's arguments, nobody questioned his facts, nobody disputed the inferences he drew from them, and nobody challenged his conclusions. Butler might have assumed that the orthodox theory had gone by default, were it not manifest that his own was still-born through neglect. He had, therefore, real cause for grievance against the professors ; he put their neglect down to narrow-mindedness, and was confirmed in his belief in the professional blind eye.

All this is familiar enough ; and Butler, it may

be said, should not have been surprised. Why should he complain if the professors lived up to the reputation he had given them? But his hostility to professionalism presently began to develop a new direction, which led him into much more dubious territory. Professionals, Butler was convinced, were hide-bound with tradition, did not think for themselves, and did not wish to do so. When, for example, a professional critic professed to criticise something, he praised not with conviction but from custom. Certain reputations in the world of art and literature were established, and the professors made their living out of exploiting them. But if the professionals were frauds, might not the reputations they maintained be fraudulent as well? Probably, said Butler, they are, at any rate let me find out for myself whether they are or not, and he proceeded to find out accordingly. The conclusions to which his inquiries led him were rather startling.

Distrust of Established Reputations.

In endeavouring to account for them, it is important to remember the bias with which Butler starts, a bias which may, perhaps, be described as that of "inverted professionalism." Whereas the professional was by nature predisposed to admire any one whom tradition had pronounced to be great, Butler was inclined to cavil at him for the same reason. The cant of conventional likes and dislikes, the professional attitude to great reputations and the slavish

adoption of it by those who desire to appear cultured, are among Butler's favourite themes. These things constitute for him a positive vice, the most fundamental in modern culture, a vice upon which he is constantly harping like a dog scratching at a sore place.

When George Pontifex went to Italy he saw the treasures of nature and art "only through the spectacles that had been handed down to him by generation after generation of prigs and impostors," and, a little further on, Mendelssohn is made fun of because he has left it on record that he sat for two hours in a certain chair in the Tribune at Florence, lost in admiration of its masterpieces. "I wonder how many chinks Mendelssohn gave himself for having sat two hours on that chair. I wonder how often he looked at his watch to see if his two hours were up. . . . But perhaps, if the truth were known, his two hours was not quite two hours."

Now Butler rails in this way because he had himself been "had" so often in the past. All through his early life he had, he felt, been humbugged by various types of professionals into thinking he liked things which he ought to like, and for a considerable time after that he had voluntarily humbugged himself into thinking he liked them too. His parents had deceived him into thinking that he revered Christianity, his schoolmasters into believing that he admired the classics, while, with the natural priggishness of the undergraduate, he had deceived himself into thinking that he liked Raphael and the poor.

One by one he had discarded these artificial enthusiasms, and was now tremendously on his guard against allowing himself to be humbugged into thinking he liked anything that he did not, particularly if it had a big reputation. So much on his guard was he, that he ended by persuading himself that the only people he liked were Handel and Homer. These solitary enthusiasms were finally established late in life. In the meantime the only course to pursue was to take each thing on its merits, to try to approach it with an open mind, as if one were hearing or seeing it for the first time, and then honestly to find out whether one liked it or not. Very few reputations could survive this treatment ; Handel and Homer were, in fact, its sole survivors.

To begin with, there were all sorts of people with overblown reputations whom nobody liked, but everybody pretended to like, because the professors said they ought to. There was Æschylus, for example ; Butler is very amusing on the subject of Æschylus in the essay *Ramblings in Cheapside*, which is contained in the volume entitled *The Humour of Homer*. He there speculates for some pages upon how Æschylus contrived to make people like him. He concludes that he must have married a theatrical manager's daughter, or squared the leading critics of his time, for " how is it conceivable that such plays should have had such runs if he had not ? " Once established, however, he was safe for all time ; the professors would see to that. This was bad enough ; but it was

not the worst. Æschylus having dug himself in, made it so much the harder for any one else to do the same, for "The ear of any age or country is like its land, air or water; it seems limitless but is really limited, and is already in the keeping of those who naturally enough will have no squatting on such valuable property. . . . There is not a square inch of it but is in private hands, and he who would freehold any part of it must do so by purchase, marriage or fighting in the usual way." Æschylus, then, is more than a fraud; he is a nuisance because he has staked out a claim.

In another essay, in the same volume, Butler has a tilt at Wordsworth, whom he dislikes for much the same reason as he dislikes Æschylus, and spins an elaborate web of argument purporting to show that Wordsworth murdered Lucy in order to escape an action for breach of promise, with which she was threatening him. "Why," asks Butler, "does Wordsworth never specify the *nature* of the difference Lucy's death would make to him?" Æschylus and Wordsworth are treated in this irreverent way partly because Butler suspects them of having been prigs, partly because the professors made much of them and were trying to turn them into what Butler called literary Struldbrugs. "There are," says Butler, "true immortals, but they are few and far between; most classics are as great impostors dead as they were living and, while posing as gods, are, five-sevenths of them, only Struldbrugs."

As a precaution against being imposed upon, especially when we are young, by Struldbrugs

foisted on us by professionals, Butler suggests the following precepts :

(i.) When you are young keep off the classics. " Latin and Greek are great humbug ; the more people know of them the more odious they generally are ; the nice people whom you delight in either never knew any at all or forgot what they had learned as soon as they could. . . . Never learn anything until you find you have been made uncomfortable a good long while by not knowing it ; when you have occasion for this or that knowledge, or perceive that you will have occasion for it shortly, the sooner you learn it the better, but till then spend your time in growing brawn and muscle."

Whether Butler would have agreed that there was something to be said for wasting one's youth over Latin and Greek, in that they prevent one from having time to spoil first-rate literature for oneself by reading it before one is old enough to appreciate it, is uncertain. What is certain is that he is here enumerating one of those fundamental principles which were shortly to be adopted by the advanced educationalists of the twentieth century.

(ii.) (Arising out of the Catechism). " I should like to see children taught that they should not say they like things which they do not like, merely because other people say they like them, and how foolish it is to say they believe this or that when they understand nothing about it."

These doctrines, in their fully developed form, are to be found in Shaw and read as follows :

Samuel Butler

“Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same,” and “The vilest abortionist is he who attempts to mould a child’s character.”

To most of us it will seem that Butler went too far in his reaction from the facile admiration of the cultured for the great. It made him cantankerous and eccentric—he was a “tart” critic; and he was terribly uncatholic. In the end, as I have hinted, he really succeeded in persuading himself that only Homer and Handel deserved his praise, and he liked Handel mainly because he thought him neglected. But when we are tempted to think in this way we must remember that Butler was sorely tried by his generation. The Victorians were terribly addicted to great reputations, and Butler’s bracing sourness is so refreshing after the sultry enthusiasms of his age, that it is difficult to regret that his reaction from professionalism should have carried him as far as it did.

CHAPTER FOUR

Butler's Practical Philosophy

IN the last chapter I endeavoured to sketch Butler's various dislikes and to indicate his reasons for them, and in so doing portrayed what may be described as the negative aspect of his teaching. It is now time to present the other side of the picture by giving some account of his more positive views. No ordered and comprehensive statement of these views appears anywhere in Butler's work, and it is improbable that he ever formulated them, even in thought, into a coherent system. They are, nevertheless, implicit in most of his utterances, and *The Way of All Flesh* may be regarded as embodying their most complete expression.

If I may be forgiven the use of a little strong philosophic language, I should say that Butler's teaching was a blend of Epicureanism and Pragmatism. Speaking as an Epicurean, he said, "Since there is no other world, let us make the best of this one"; speaking as a Pragmatist, he added, "The best of this one consists in being happy and successful, and truth and morality have no meaning or authority except in so far as they contribute to our happiness and success." Asked how he knew this, Butler would have

answered, "Not by reason, but by faith," and since faith meant for him nothing more nor less than instinct, we may, if we please, further dilute Butler's philosophical mixture with a dash of Bergsonism, with perhaps a suspicion of Freudianism.

Let us begin with the next world.

BUTLER ON IMMORTALITY

All good Epicureans are sceptical about a future existence. In this they are right, since, if they were anxious about their prospects in the future, they would be less well equipped for making the best of the present. All religious beliefs have emphasised the transitoriness and insignificance of this world, in order the better to throw into relief the permanence and importance of the next. Herein lies the secret of much of their popularity, since those of us who feel that our fellow men do not value us at our true worth are able to console ourselves by reflecting on the more permanent character of the rewards we shall receive in heaven, where we shall be dealt with according to our real merits. This reflection affords peculiar satisfaction to the poor, the miserable and the oppressed, by providing them with a refuge from present unhappiness in the imagined joys of perennial bliss hereafter. It carries with it, however, the disadvantage of making people, who might otherwise have been happy, forego some of the joys that are possible, for fear of jeopardising their future salvation. Too many have taken Lazarus and the needle's

eye seriously, with the result that they have held themselves back from a full enjoyment of those goods that were within their reach.

Religion is a form of insurance. It is a projection of the average man's desire to insure against discomfort from his conscience in the present, and possible discomfort at the hands of the Almighty in the hereafter; and the premiums are paid in the form of self-mortification and self-denial, tintured with a little wholesome boredom on Sundays.

Now to one who, like Butler, renounced the whole conception of a future life, such a form of procedure was as futile as it was ugly. Anything that militated against present happiness was, in fact, blameworthy, and Butler did his best to laugh it out of court. There was, to be sure, a continued existence of a sort, but it was a very different affair from what the theologians imagined it to be, and the best form of insurance in respect of it was to stand as well as possible with one's neighbours here and now.

In *Erewhon Revisited* there is a chapter entitled, "Professor Gargoyle's Pamphlet 'On the Physics of Vicarious Existence,'" which in all probability contains Butler's own views, in so far as he had any, on the subject of continued existence. Professor Gargoyle begins by demonstrating that no hard and fast line separates life from death. "To be alive . . . is only to be unable to understand how dead one is, and to be dead is only to be invincibly ignorant concerning one's own livingness." For what, after all, is life? The

two most salient characteristics of life are the power of influencing the lives and actions of others and a corresponding sensitiveness to their influence. A. influences B. through his will power; the resultant actions which are called B.'s are, therefore, much more truly to be considered A.'s, the only difference between them and those actions which are entirely A.'s being, that in the first case A. is making use of the mechanism of B.'s body to give effect to his will, instead of using his own. He is, in short, living in B. Let us suppose that a man writes a book which delights or displeases thousands of people, influencing their actions accordingly, and then falls asleep. Which is his truest life, the one he is leading in them, or that equally unconscious life residing in his own body? Clearly the former. The fact that a man cannot control his vicarious life in others is unimportant. How many of our own actions do we really control? So is the fact that it is outside him. "Those who make the life of a man reside within his body are like one who should mistake the carpenter's tool box for the carpenter."

Now this vicarious life is lived by every one of us after death just as truly as it is lived in life. In life the life we are living in others pains or delights us according as others think ill or well of us. The hell we fear is a present hell in men's bad thoughts; the heaven we hope for is a present heaven in their good ones. These hopes and fears influence our conduct now, as much as the crude representations of heaven and hell com-

monly employed as baits and deterrents by the Christian theology.

Immortality, then, is existence in other men's thoughts and lives, and this existence continues unbroken by the bodily accident we call death. Heaven is nothing more nor less than the good thoughts and wishes entertained towards us by our fellows ; if we wish to gain it, let us stand well with them, and if we wish to stand well with them, let us first stand well with ourselves by being happy and successful.

PRAGMATISM AND THE TEST OF INSTINCT

I have already glanced briefly at Butler's dislike of absolutes. This dislike manifests itself in every aspect of his thought. There was not, he held, nor could there ever be, a true philosophy, since, with regard to every philosophic system hitherto put forward, there were some facts which were known to contradict it. Similarly, there were no absolute rules of life. Every rule was liable to exceptions, while, as for morality, it had and could have no meaning except in terms of happiness, and different people were made happy in different ways. In these circumstances "truth is what commends itself to the great majority of sensible and successful people," and morality was devoid alike of meaning and value "if it was not that which on the whole brought a man peace at the last."

These sentiments are more than half-way on the road to Pragmatism. "The 'true,'" said William James, "is . . . only the expedient in

the way of our thinking, just as the 'right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run of course." But while the conclusions of Butler and James were in many ways identical, the roads by which they reached them were widely different. The doctrine that truth is relative and provisional, which, for the Pragmatists, was dictated mainly by logical and metaphysical considerations, is in Butler's case strongly reinforced, even if it was not originally suggested, by the study of biology. Butler had formed the habit of approaching every subject from a biological angle, and biology had taught him that rigid laws and hard and fast distinctions were to be found nowhere in the realm of existence. Inorganic matter shaded into organic matter; children were already alive in their parents, from whom, indeed, they were not to be distinguished, and evolution proceeded in the main by modifications in existing species so gradual that, between any number of observed generations, the differences were scarcely perceptible. Such modifications as occurred were the outcome of the will to change and evolve on the part of the beings that modified themselves. Will, then, is relative to action; and action is all-important. Now action is undertaken by an organism whose very nature and being it is to evolve, and, since there is no external inorganic world of static dead matter, the dead passing imperceptibly into the living, the world in which organisms evolve is itself evolving. In such a world no one thing can be

truly said to be before it is already something else ; everything is, in fact, half-way on the road which leads from the thing which preceded it to the thing which is to come after it.

Existence, then, is a continual flow, not, certainly, without features, but without hard and fast lines to mark off one feature from another. As for thought, it is to be regarded as a tool evolved for the purposes of action, for, since evolution is the *raison d'être* of all created things, and since evolution is a form of action, our whole nature must be relative and subordinated to action. Thought, therefore, is relative and provisional, a good servant but a bad master. But thought, whose nature and function we have just described, must, in order to perform this function adequately, introduce divisions into the flow of evolution. This procedure is excellent and, indeed, necessary for the purposes of action—nobody could act in a world which was a gigantic jelly quivering with eagerness to become another kind of jelly—but disastrous for philosophy, since thought, which creates and lives by hard and fast distinctions, falsifies reality when it endeavours to give us a picture of it. It makes, as Bergson would say, “cuts across the living flow,” and erects as a result arbitrary divisions between thing and thing, between truth and falsehood and between right and wrong, which have no counterpart in reality.

Now thought, when it is used in this way and made to speculate about the ultimate nature of things, is being misused ; it is abstracted from its

proper function of subserving action and put to uses for which it was not evolved and never intended. As a consequence, logic, which is the name we give to the abstract workings of thought as opposed to its application to concrete problems, is, from its very nature, a falsifying process. Hence arises Butler's distrust of logical conclusions and logical extremes, and his preference for illogical means. "Why is it so necessary to avoid extremes of truthfulness?" asks Mr. Turvy, the headmaster of the Moral Deformatory in *Erewhon Revisited*. "Because, sir, extremes meet, and extreme truth will be mixed with extreme falsehood," answers the head boy. Similarly in *The Way of All Flesh*, having arrived at the conclusion that reality is a unity in which no one thing can properly be separated from any other, and having pointed out that this conclusion reduces to futility all practical systems of life hitherto invented, Butler continues, "Much the best way out of this difficulty is to go in for separation between internal and external subject and object when we find it convenient, and unity between the same when we find unity convenient. This is illogical, but extremes are alone logical, and they are always absurd; the mean is alone practicable and it is always illogical. It is faith and not logic which is the supreme arbiter."

In this distrust of logic and dislike of intellectualism, and, indeed, in all his thinking on these subjects, Butler is anticipating Bergson. There is, indeed, so strong a likeness between the thought of the two men, that Butler may well

have been one of the undetected sources of Bergson's philosophy. But while his conclusions are in the main those of Bergson, there is, more especially in his repeated protests against hard and fast rules and absolute truths, an element of temperamental and emotional dislike which is more reminiscent of William James. William James claims for the pragmatist temper "the open air possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth."

Butler might have claimed the same for his own. A thing which simply is true, or simply is right whether you like it or not, is to him hateful and oppressive, and he feels that he is escaping from a prison made not by stone walls, but by hard facts, when he has tamed and humanised truth and morality and made them man's servants and not his masters. Even rules are tolerable when we are at liberty to break them.

But when it comes to the question of finding a substitute for reason as a guide to life, Butler's answer is once again the answer of Bergson, that "It is faith," or, as Bergson would say, "intuition," "and not logic, which is the supreme arbiter." Now faith for Butler is little more than a belief in the trustworthiness of instinct, just as for Bergson it is instinct glorified and ennobled by reason. Since we are creatures who evolve, and evolve along the lines that life has set for us, it is only to be expected that we should have devised in the course of past ages some faculty whose business it should be to tell us unconsciously what those lines are, thus ensuring that on the whole

we fulfil the intention of life with regard to us. This faculty is instinct, and those people who evolve most successfully, those organisms, that is to say, which are most admirably adapted to the purposes of living, are those whose instincts guide them most truly. "Instinct, then, is the ultimate court of appeal. And what is instinct? It is a mode of faith in the evidence of things not actually seen." Thus instinct for Butler has a biological foundation. It is a faculty which has been evolved in order to enable us to survive and to succeed, and faith, or belief in instinct, "consists in holding that the instincts of the best men and women are themselves an evidence which may not be set aside lightly." People who are successful are always found to be so in virtue of their possession of the right instincts. Even luck is a kind of instinct. I have heard attributed to Butler the remark that "Luck is the unconscious wisdom of those who have been consciously wise in their previous existences." I cannot find the remark anywhere in Butler's works, and conclude that it is one of the things he ought to have said but did not.

It follows that it is by observing what happy and successful people do, and by trying to imitate them, that we shall succeed ourselves. If we are not born either with the unconscious wisdom which is "luck," or with an equipment of instincts which are biologically useful, let us try to acquire conscious wisdom by observing those who are. Thus the typical wise man is epitomised in the *Odyssey*, and, according to *The Way of All Flesh*,

rightly epitomised as one who knows "the ways and farings of many men." If, then, we were to try to sum up Butler's philosophy of life in the most general terms, we should state it as follows: This world is fleeting and unstable; nothing in it is sure; make the best of it, therefore, while you can. In order to do this you must be successful and give heed to the great body of sensible men who are successful. Trust your instinct and distrust your reason; be happy yourself first and look to the happiness of others afterwards.

"Come and go," as Professor Gargoyle says, "pervades all things of which we have knowledge, and if there was any provision made, it seems to have been for a short life and a merry one, with enough chance of extension beyond the grave to be worth trying for."

EPICUREANISM

Let us now proceed to consider how Butler applies his philosophy in practice. Our duty in life is, as we have seen, to be happy, and we are most likely to be happy by cultivating the example of sensible and successful people. We say most likely and not certainly, because, as we have seen, there is no absolute recipe for success in life. "The golden rule is that there is no golden rule," says Shaw, and he learned the sentiment, if not the expression, from Butler.

Now what does observation show the behaviour of successful people to be? In the first place they value happiness and riches; in the second they have no more to do with morality than they find

convenient for the acquisition of happiness and riches ; and in the third they display a healthy distrust of learning and a healthy respect for other people's opinion as embodied in the standards of the majority. They are, in short, normally conventional unless they have good reason to be the contrary.

We will take these ingredients of the successful life separately, beginning with the dispensation from overmuch morality.

(a) Morality and Happiness.

In speaking of Butler's exhortation to the successful to dispense with overmuch morality, I should, perhaps, have added the qualification "morality as usually understood," for what Butler meant by morality was something very different from what the world understood by it. For the world at large morality meant doing disagreeable things in the interests of what was supposed to be one's duty : one's duty might, of course, occasionally give one pleasure, because one's duty often made it necessary to be unpleasant to others for their good ; but one must never admit this, and in any event it did not alter the general truth of the axiom that morality meant unpleasantness for somebody. Goodness, in fact, always involved unpleasantness somewhere, being either unpleasant to oneself or an excuse for making oneself unpleasant to somebody else. Now morality in this sense had no meaning for Butler ; he regarded it simply as a device for making oneself and others uncomfortable, and,

therefore, to be eschewed. The only meaning which he was prepared to admit for morality was one which identified it with the means to pleasure, and the only possible use he could see for it was that on the whole, and when indulged in judiciously and in moderation, it promoted pleasure. Whereas others, therefore, opposed duty to pleasure and tended to hold that if one's duty was pleasant it could not be one's duty, Butler recognised no duty except the duty to promote pleasure. And if we ask whose pleasure, the answer is, one's own.

Of Butler's Utilitarianism in general I have already said enough, but it is necessary to add here that it was Utilitarianism of the brand of Bentham rather than of Mill. Both Bentham and Mill agreed that one's duty was to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but while Mill held that in case of conflict between the individual and the community it was the duty of the former to prefer the happiness of the community to his own, Bentham held that no such conflict could possibly arise; and it could not arise because in promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number the individual was automatically promoting his own. Bentham was led to this rather surprising view by an inspection of his own psychology; he was a benevolent gentleman who liked doing good, and found, or persuaded himself that he found, his greatest happiness in philanthropy. Without sharing Bentham's views on this latter point, Butler held conclusions which were not very different. He

also maintained that there was no real conflict between the pleasure of the individual and that of the community, but he took this view, not for Bentham's reason, but because he thought that the best way to make others happy was to be happy oneself. The happiness of the community was in any event a somewhat vague and intangible thing about which it was difficult to obtain any very definite information. Our own happiness is real and tangible enough, and we know within limits, or we ought to know if we have any common sense, how to obtain it. Since happy people are generally liked, it is to be inferred that our own happiness gives pleasure to others.

One's first duty, therefore, is to oneself. If one is happy oneself, one is more likely than not to make others happy too, and, since this is thought to be virtuous, one's own happiness is the highest virtue of which one is capable. "For most men and most circumstances," Butler reflects in *The Way of All Flesh*, "pleasure—tangible, material prosperity in the world—is the safest test of virtue, . . . the most virtuous have leaned to excess rather than to asceticism."

If this be so, it follows that any one who is reasonably contented and prosperous is reasonably virtuous as well, and has no need of any morality beyond what has made him contented and prosperous. Thus Butler extends a white sheet even over the wicked business man.¹ Speaking of Mr. Pontifex the elder, an unpleasant

¹ It is probable that if Butler had lived through the war he would have reversed his views on this point.

but very successful publisher, he says, "Mr. Pontifex's life not only continued a long time but was prosperous right up to the end. Is not this enough? Being in this world, is it not our obvious business to make the most of it—to observe what things do, *bonâ fide*, tend to good life and comfort, and to act accordingly? All animals, except man, know that the principal business of life is to enjoy it—and they do enjoy it as much as man and other circumstances will allow. He has spent his life best who has enjoyed it most; God will take care that we do not enjoy any more than is good for us."

Virtue, therefore, like everything else, is to be interpreted biologically. It is the name which is given to that kind of conduct which man has found to be on the whole most likely to make him happy. Virtue "springs," as Butler puts it, "from man's experience concerning his own well-being—and this, though not infallible, is still the least fallible thing we have."

A sound education will, therefore, insist above all things upon the duty of seeking happiness. Nobody who sets out to be a teacher of the young should neglect to inculcate this duty. It is true that their own instincts will insist upon the young realising the importance of happiness sooner or later, but there is no reason why the inherited experience of the race on this point should be withheld from them, when they might be taking advantage of it from the very beginning. Butler includes, therefore, in his proposals for the revision of the Catechism the introduction of "a few words

insisting on the duty of seeking all reasonable pleasure and avoiding all pain that can be honourably avoided."

(b) *Importance of Money.*

We have already seen that imitation of the prosperous and successful is the best guide to happiness. The prosperous and successful are wise in this world's wisdom, and so long as we are in it, it is the wisdom of this world and not of any other that will bring us happiness. Now all prosperous and successful people lay great store by money, and owe their prosperity and success to their ability to make it. The importance of having money cannot, therefore, be over-estimated.

"They say," soliloquises Ernest in *The Way of All Flesh*, "that those who have riches enter hardly into the kingdom of heaven. By Jove they do; they are like Struldbrugs; they live and live and live and are happy for many a long year after they would have entered into the kingdom of heaven if they had been poor."

When Ernest learns in prison that Pryer has lost most of his, Ernest's, money on the Stock Exchange and decamped with the rest, we are told that it was a severe shock to him, but not so severe as it would have been if he had had more experience of the world, money losses being "the hardest to bear of any by those who are old enough to comprehend them." Butler proceeds to point out that there is nothing which a man fears so much as monetary loss; with strength and

energy a man may survive the loss of a reputation and get a new one ; even loss of health is more endurable, since, though suicide is rarely sought as a means of escape from bodily pain, it is a common consequence of financial ruin, while men who go coolly and even courageously to be hanged have been known completely to lose their nerve in face of severe money losses. There is little chance, then, that sensible people will err through under-valuing money. But for the young there is real danger. Owing to the common fiction that material goods are less important than spiritual, and the delusion deliberately inculcated by professionals that, since it is impossible to serve both God and Mammon, God deserves the preference, the young are liable to grow up without a proper respect for money or an adequate knowledge of how to make and keep it, and be under the necessity of learning both by painful experience. Ernest, who had been taught to despise money, had never been taught how to handle it ; consequently he only realised its value when he had lost it to Pryer.

All our conventional sentiments on the subject of money are even more than is normally the case infected with cant and falsehood. As a matter of fact not only is it possible to serve God and Mammon, but the proper business of man is to serve both. "Cursed be they that say, 'Thou shalt not serve God and Mammon,' for it is the whole duty of man to know how to adjust the conflicting claims of these two deities," says the Sunchild in *Erewhon Revisited*. In order, therefore, that Mammon

may be served with knowledge as well as respect, Butler urges that proper instruction on the subject of money-making should be included in school curricula. A speculation master should be attached to every school, and boys should be encouraged to read the best financial papers and to establish a stock exchange among themselves, in which pence should rank as pounds. Boys who lose their money time after time should be expelled. Butler is proceeding to recommend that professorships in speculation should be established at Oxford and Cambridge, but remembers in time that since the only things they do well there are cooking, cricket, rowing and games, in which there are no professorships, "the establishment of a professorial chair would end in teaching young men neither how to speculate nor how not to speculate, but would simply turn them out as bad speculators." All properly regulated communities, Butler urges, implicitly accept his standards in these matters, whatever they may say to the contrary. Rich men receive and always will receive homage from those poorer than themselves, for the same reason as living creatures all the world over pay respect to those whom they recognise to be higher than themselves in the scale of life. "Throughout all known time there has been a feeling that those who are worth most are the worthiest"; so that in *Erewhon*, where so many of the implicit habits of thought, to which we are ashamed to confess, are made explicit and given official recognition, "if a man has made a fortune of over £20,000

they exempt him from all taxation, considering him as a work of art and too precious to be meddled with; they say, 'How very much he must have done for society before society could have been prevailed upon to give him so much money'"; and again we are told, "Money is the symbol of duty; it is the sacrament of having done for mankind that which mankind wanted."

Doubtless there is more than a suspicion of satire here, but with regard to Butler's real conviction of the importance of money there is no doubt. Poverty was for him a crime which no self-respecting community would tolerate. The poor man was wretched himself, and, since he made others feel uncomfortable in his presence, he was immoral as well as wretched. Biologically he was not a success, and the sooner he faded away and made room for an organism better able to look after itself, the better for everybody concerned. The fully developed doctrine in which these detached reflections were one day to bear fruit, will be found in Shaw's Preface to *Major Barbara*. Nowhere do Shaw's views manifest more directly the influence of Butler than in this famous preface on the crime of being poor, and in no direction have Butler's ideas, expressed half playfully, half seriously, through the mouth of the genial Overton and in the whimsical regulations of the Erewhonians, proved more destructive of cant than in his attack upon the cant of the virtue of poverty.

It is possible that Butler may have been led to overestimate the importance of money through

his own lack of it. It was not that he was a poor man ; as the result of successful sheep farming in New Zealand, he began his London life as a comparatively rich one. But he invested injudiciously, and was shamelessly exploited by one Pauli, a man whom he had above all others befriended, who drew a pension of £200 a year from Butler on the score of poverty, while making not less than £700 himself at the Bar. After the death of Butler's father his financial difficulties ceased, but he was so absurdly generous in his dealings with all who crossed his path, that until comparatively late in life he himself was compelled to live in the simplest and most frugal manner. We all tend, moreover, to place an excessive value on those things in which we, in spite of all our efforts, are lacking, but which others seem able to command at will. Butler was terribly unfortunate in his literary career. Not only did the scientists cold-shoulder him, but the general public persistently refused to take to him. His books sold wretchedly, and it may well be that the continual emphasis which he lays upon financial success and practical competence springs from a saddened realisation of his own failure as an author. Had he found it easier to succeed, he might have thought success less important. Butler felt his failures deeply. In spite of all his quips and jests at his own expense, his constant references to his want of success, his very anxiety to make a clean breast of it, show how much he took it to heart. At the end of *The Notebooks* there is a statistical table showing a profit and loss account on all his

books sold up to date (1899). Two only, *Erewhon* and *Life and Habit*, show a profit, while the total loss on all the books published is over £400. The later books are even less successful than the earlier, a fact upon which Butler comments as follows: "It will be noticed that my public appears to be a declining one; I attribute this to the long course of practical boycott to which I have been subjected for so many years, or, if not of boycott, of sneer, snarl and misrepresentation. I cannot help it, nor, if the truth were known, am I at any pains to try to do so."

(c) *Doing what Others Do.*

There has never been so cranky a person who had so little patience with cranks as Butler. An individual more removed from the common ways of men, with less sympathy with the thought and culture of his time, it would be difficult to imagine. Butler lived the life of an anchorite, had few friends and fewer amusements, ate sparingly, was a celibate, and when he was not travelling in Italy, devoted himself unremittingly to the pursuit of unremunerative painting and literature. With the average sensual man he had literally nothing in common. As for his intellectual sympathies, they expressed themselves chiefly in a thorough-going attack on the thought and customs of his age; he satirised its institutions, made fun of its habits and was perpetually at loggerheads with its intellectuals. "Quite so," Butler might have replied, "that is exactly my position. I admit that I satirise and

criticise ; but I do it, not because I am a crank, but because I am an ordinary man. Intellectuals are cranks ; they are outside the main stream of life, they are given to thought instead of to action, and they are all wrong. It is natural, therefore, that I should come to blows with them. But that does not mean that I despise or am out of touch with the great mass of average, sensible people. On the contrary, I am at loggerheads with the intellectuals just because they are."

If this is really Butler's answer, the question still remains, "Why, then, did he not live as other men live?" Nobody could credit his assertion that he was at bottom on the side of common sense, beefsteak and the city man, when his own life was cranky beyond belief.

The probability is that Butler knew himself for a congenital crank, whether he liked it or not, and, in order to chasten the crankiness in him, spent his time in belauding the virtues of ordinarieness and the common man.

Be this as it may, his teaching on the subject is unequivocal. In the first place, it is clear that ordinary people know what suits them much better than learned people do ; they also know what suits them better than learned people know what suits learned people. What is true of learned people is also true of pious people. When Mrs. Nosnibor, in *Erewhon*, deploras the growing lack of respect for the Musical Banks, and suggests that people are heedless of their own highest interests, the author reflects, "I could say nothing in reply, but I have ever been of opinion that the

greater part of mankind do approximately know where they get that which does them good." Book learning is a poor guide to life. Not only does it make us wiser than our neighbours, which is bad for us and causes them to dislike us, but it leads us to worry ourselves with questions about things which it is better that we should take on trust. It is to be noticed that those successful people whom we are bidden to imitate never bother themselves with questions about the meaning of life, any more than they do with moral precepts. "Sensible people," we are told, "will get through life by rule of thumb as they may interpret it most conveniently, without asking too many questions for conscience' sake." If we want to be amiable, then, let us eschew intellectual controversy, and be as indifferent as possible on those questions over which men dispute. This is particularly true, Ernest finds, in matters of religion, "inasmuch as those who care very much about either religion or irreligion are seldom observed to be very well bred or agreeable people." It is only those people who are different from the bulk of their fellows who do care about these subjects, and a poor time they have of it. The extreme instance of thinking differently from one's fellows is the genius, who has a very poor time of it indeed. The view of the Erewhonians was that "genius was like offences—needs must that it come, but woe unto that man through whom it comes. A man's business, they hold, is to think as his neighbours do, for Heaven help him if he thinks good what they count bad." "It

is not our business," says the Professor of Worldly Wisdom, "to help students to think for themselves. Surely this is the very last thing which one who wishes them well should encourage them to do. Our duty is to ensure that they shall think as we do, or, at any rate, as we hold it expedient to say we do."

Certain consequences with regard to education follow. Reading, writing, speculation and book-keeping by double entry, all these are included in Butler's curriculum, and the importance of the last two we have already noted. But book learning and literary culture had better be eschewed, unless a young man insists on having them at all costs. The only culture which, for most of us, is worth having is knowledge of the ways of the world. "What culture is comparable to this? What a lie, what a sickly debilitating debauch, did not Ernest's school and university career now seem to him, in comparison with his life in prison and as a tailor in Blackfriars." Taught by the lesson of his own mispent youth, he causes his children to be brought up by a family of bargees at Gravesend. Here they are happy, healthy and reasonably ignorant; they have no respect for their elders, they mess about with boats and water, and Ernest regards them with complete approval.

The above extracts will make the drift of Butler's practical teaching sufficiently clear. It is a doctrine of healthy selfishness tempered with salutary respect for others. If you want to be happy, says Butler in effect, do the things that

others do and have always done. Pray a little, fight a little, dance a little, swear a little, drink and make love, sing a little in chorus, dig a little in the earth and go on the water in ships; have recourse, in short, to all those ancestral sources of happiness which have been proved to be good by the experience of past generations. If you must think, think as others do and eschew originality like the devil. By so doing you will make people like you; their approval will bring you happiness, and in being happy yourself you will make others happy.

BUTLER'S FAVOURITE CHARACTERS

The best illustrations of Butler's philosophy as applied in practice are the characters in his books. Those of them whom he really likes, the happy and successful ones whom he holds up for our admiration, though admirably endowed with common sense, have little intelligence and no originality. They are conventional in morals (except when they find it convenient to dispense with them altogether) and incurious and even stupid in intellectual matters, but immensely competent and practical in the affairs of this world. Towneley and Mrs. Jupp in *The Way of All Flesh*, Yram, George and Mrs. Humdrum in *Erewhon Revisited*, Mrs. Hicks in *The Notebooks*, are all in their different ways examples of his teaching.

Most of them are, or have been, handsome. Even Mrs. Jupp, the most shameless and attractive old sinner in English literature since Falstaff, deplores the fact that Ernest and Mr. Overton

did not behold her when young. "But ah! You should have seen me when I was sweet seventeen. I was the very moral of my poor dear mother, and she was a pretty woman, though I say it that shouldn't. She had such a splendid mouth of teeth. It was a sin to bury her in her teeth," and gives her hearers to understand that, in spite of her extreme age, she is still much solicited; while, as for Mrs. Hicks, though "she has a great beard and moustaches and three projecting teeth in her lower jaw, . . . besides being singularly dirty in her person," she "dearly loves a joke and a little flirtation. I always say something perhaps a little impudently broad to her, and she likes it extremely." While Mrs. Jupp is flagrantly and unabashedly immoral, Yram and George are, perhaps, more representative of Butler's teaching in that, though moral enough on the whole and strictly honourable (witness Yram's decision to tell Professor Hanky that the Sunchild would hear his dedication sermon, a decision which outstripped the limits even of the strictly moral in the extreme delicacy of the motives that inspired it), they are both of them prepared to dispense with morality when they find it inconvenient. Yram is proud to say of her son George that "he enjoys falsehood as well as we all do, and has the nicest sense of when to lie and when not to do so," upon which George's father comments, "What gift can be more invaluable?" George, not to be outdone in compliments, is equally proud to describe himself as "son to my mother—and to one who can stretch

a point or two in the way of honesty as well as other people." George, indeed, with Towneley in *The Way of All Flesh*, appears to embody Butler's ideal of what a young man should be. He combines great practical ability and the capacity for rapid decision with marked personal charm. By virtue of these qualities he wins the complete confidence of his father, the Sunchild. "The promptitude with which George took to him, the obvious pleasure he had in running him, his quick judgment, verging as it should towards rashness, his confidence that my father trusted him without reserve, the conviction of perfect openness which was conveyed by the way in which his eyes never budged from my father's when he spoke to him, his genial kindly manner, perfect physical health, and the air he had of being on the best possible terms with himself and everyone else" prove too much for his father who, overpowered by such a combination, handed himself over unreservedly to George's protection.

Towneley is just as nice as George, though less intelligent. A rowing blue and an athlete, genial to the "nobodies" like Ernest, cultivated by every one, yet without a trace of snobbishness, not fastidious in his pleasures, as witness his visits to "the governess," Miss Snow, yet unsparing in his efforts to save Ernest from needless humiliation, he is for Butler the *beau ideal* of the organism which has succeeded in adapting itself to the circumstances of life. He has common sense and he has right instincts, and in virtue of these inestimable possessions, albeit

without either knowledge or the desire for it, he can be relied upon to place his feet in the middle of life's fairway with as much success and confidence as Ernest, with twice his mental equipment, can be trusted to put his foot in it every time. "The people like Towneley," Ernest sadly reflects, "are the only ones who know anything that is worth knowing, and like that, of course, I can never be. But to make Towneleys there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water—men, in fact, through whom conscious knowledge must pass before it can reach those who can apply it gracefully and instinctively as the Towneleys can."

Here we have Butler's biological doctrine, and his practical application of it in a nutshell. Human beings, like all other organisms, are at different levels of evolution. Those who are most advanced are not those who have the most brains, but those who have already learned in the persons of their ancestors that art of living which their less fortunate brethren are toilsomely acquiring in their own; and who, once having learned it, do not know that they have it, but possess it unconsciously. People of this type get right unfailingly and instinctively what others learn laboriously and consciously with many mistakes and much expenditure of intellectual effort. Brains, then, are only a half-way house to the acquirement of right instincts. Ultimately, when we do everything right instinctively, we shall have no need to think at all. Then we shall be happy.

The complete portrait of Butler's ideal man is sketched by Ernest at the end of *The Way of All Flesh* in a passage on the function of society as follows: "That a man should have been bred well and breed others well; that his figure, head, hands, feet, voice, manner and clothes should carry conviction upon this point, so that no one can look at him without seeing that he has come of good stock and is likely to throw good stock himself, this is a *desiderandum*. And the same with a woman. The greatest number of these well-bred men and women, and the greatest happiness of these well-bred men and women, this is the highest good; towards this all government, all social conventions, all art, literature and science should directly or indirectly tend. Holy men and holy women are those who keep this unconsciously in view at all times whether of work or pastime."

BUTLER AND SHAW

Intellect is thus for Butler an evolutionary makeshift. It does laboriously and clumsily what instinct does quickly and infallibly, and each advance in evolution witnesses a fresh suppression of intellect by instinct. Once we had to think about circulating our blood; now we do it unconsciously; to-day we have to work out our accounts to find out how much money we have spent, how much we have left; to-morrow we shall dispense with the accounts and know the size of our bank balance instinctively. Meanwhile our intellect is useful enough as an apologist and

a support for those instincts which are not yet sufficiently sure of themselves ; it enables us to invent pretexts for what we instinctively want to do, and arguments for what we instinctively want to believe.

I cannot bring myself to conclude this chapter without pointing out the fundamental difference between the views of Butler and Shaw on this question of the function of the intellect. Each writer is a great adherent of practical intelligence ; each sings the praises of common sense. Shaw, like Butler, hates professionals, is contemptuous of artists and distrustful of scholars, and, again like Butler, tends to look at people from a biological point of view, recognising in those organisms which are best adapted to the purpose of living the most noteworthy and valuable products of evolution. Finally, for Shaw as for Butler, such persons are those who, while possessing no culture and few intellectual attainments, nevertheless exhibit a store of instinctive rule of thumb philosophy. 'Enry Straker and Alfred Doolittle are the lineal descendants of Mrs. Jupp and Yram. All these very pleasant and amusing people know what to do on all ordinary and extraordinary occasions, but none of them could tell you how they know it or why they ought to do it. Like some fortunate bridge players, they play the right card instinctively, while others after much thought and travail as often as not produce the wrong one.

So far the outlook of the two thinkers is the same ; but when we push our inquiries a stage

further, a marked difference reveals itself. Butler regards the operations of the speculative intellect as a pedantic futility, and appears to look forward with equanimity to the merging of the practical intellect in unconscious instinct. There is nothing in his writings to show that he does not think man would be better off without intellect altogether, and that its gradual supersession may be expected as the next stage in human progress towards the goal of evolution. For Shaw, on the other hand, the unfettered operations of intellect *are* the goal of evolution. For him as for Butler the force that animates the Universe is a vast unconscious urge, but it is an unconscious urge struggling for consciousness. He admires the instinctively successful and practical man, but only because it is in such as he that life, by achieving a momentary equilibrium in the present, prepares itself for new achievements in the future. Shaw glories in life; he glories in it to the extent of maintaining that if we are to live properly we must live longer; but he only wants us to live longer in order that we may think more. Thus the Ancients in the last play of the *Back to Methuselah* Pentateuch, having achieved a relative emancipation from the needs and exigencies of material existence, employ their freedom in the intellectual contemplation of unchanging reality. It is this contemplation, the occupation and the delight of mystics in all ages, that Shaw seems to regard as the object of evolution; it is for this that the whole experiment of life was undertaken. God,

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said Aristotle, is continuously engaged in doing mathematical problems. Following the same line of thought Shaw interprets evolution as a process, in which, as man emerges into godhead, he will increasingly occupy himself with abstract intellectual pursuits.

Butler prepared the way for this conception, but he did not share it. He divined the meaning and the method of evolution, but he gave no hint of its ultimate purpose. The coherent system with which Shaw presents us in *Back to Methuselah* is thus a definite advance on Butler's work. It embodies a constructive essay in philosophy, which was probably beyond the reach of Butler's more negative mind; though it may be doubted whether, if Butler had not lived, such an essay could have been made. In this, as in so much else, Butler was Socrates to Shaw's Plato.

CHAPTER FIVE

Humour and Machines

BUTLER'S IRRESPONSIBILITY

IN the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to give a brief sketch of Butler's philosophy and to show how it was applied in practice. In doing so I feel that I have been unconsciously led into suggesting that Butler was a much more solemn and serious person than he really was. This was perhaps inevitable. When you are trying to say exactly what a man thought and why he thought it, it is not possible to do justice to the lighter and more intimate sides of his nature, save in so far as these have some direct bearing upon the main theme.

In this brief concluding chapter, therefore, I shall try to redress the balance by devoting a few pages to that peculiar exuberance and spontaneity of nature which makes of Butler so attractive a figure. Butler was a much more irresponsible man than Shaw; less serious, less earnest, less grown up. He felt what he felt strongly, but he could always forget it on occasions and take a mental holiday. He was not always grinding the axe of creative evolution; he was not always girding at the professionals; more often than not he was playing with ideas as

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a boy plays with a ball and, incidentally, shocking the pundits for the sheer fun of the thing. This boyish irresponsibility is the source of most of Butler's wit. His intellectual fortune was spent in buying penny crackers to put beneath the pedestals of the great. Yes! But they were not always the great. Any one would do at a pinch, if none of the great were within earshot.

Butler had an inordinate love of mischief. He loved to shock and to startle. He is like a schoolboy sticking pins into the master's chair; when the master jumps nobody is more delighted than Butler. Hence his wit is much less frequently than Shaw's the pointed expression of a serious conviction. When he tells us that God did not allow tobacco to be discovered earlier, because he knew that, if he had, St. Paul would certainly have forbidden its use, he is having a sly dig at St. Paul because it annoys him to see people taking St. Paul so seriously. St. Paul is a favourite subject with Butler. "Paul," Ernest reflects, "had fought with wild beasts at Ephesus—that must indeed have been awful—but perhaps they were not very wild beasts; a rabbit and a canary are wild beasts; but, formidable or not as wild beasts go, they would nevertheless stand no chance against St. Paul, for he was inspired; the miracle would have been if the wild beasts escaped, not that St. Paul should have done so."

An excessive reputation for piety or moral eminence is too much for Butler's equanimity.

It is like a china ornament on a shelf to a boy with a tennis ball, a standing temptation to be knocked over. It is not that the boy has any special grudge against the ornament as an ornament, but he dislikes the "don't touch me air" with which the veneration of his elders has surrounded it. Any one whom Butler considers smug and priggish like the ornament, as for example, Mendelssohn, Tennyson, or St. Anthony, is gently taken down. St. Anthony, Butler thinks, must have liked the devils that tempted him better than other devils for old acquaintance sake, and showed them as much indulgence as was compatible with decorum. "Besides . . . St. Anthony tempted the devils quite as much as they tempted him ; for his peculiar sanctity was a greater temptation to tempt him than they could stand. Strictly speaking, it was the devils who were the more to be pitied, for they were led up to St. Anthony to be tempted and fell, whereas St. Anthony did not fall."

Butler is like a schoolboy, too, in his sexlessness. A bachelor himself, he achieves all his literary effects without women. There is a shrill treble in his accents which bids them take warning that his interests lie elsewhere ; he is interested in ideas, not in women, just as a boy of fourteen is interested in steam engines and not in girls, and this comparative freedom from the pre-occupation of most adults enables him, while maintaining a philosophic aloofness from the more emotional aspects of life, to concentrate the more keenly on those intellectual problems which were the only

stimulus he acknowledged. While robbing his work of warmth and colour, it enhances its intellectual force and clarity ; while diminishing him as a man, it enlarges him as a thinker. It helps us, moreover, to understand his irreverence and his brilliance. He is irreverent like a school boy and brilliant like a clever schoolboy. When he tells us that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have lost at all, he is making a fool of Tennyson, as a fifth form boy can on occasion make a fool of his teacher. The joke has no intellectual content ; it expresses no real conviction about the importance of losing one's wife ; it does not even prevent Butler from expressing exactly the reverse sentiment on the next page. He says it for the sheer love of saying a clever thing. And it is no doubt very clever, so clever that, like many of his remarks, it dazzles us into thinking that it really means something, besides its cleverness. Now much of Butler's work has this dazzling yet deceptive quality. It is iridescent as a bubble when it catches the light, but there is nothing inside it ; it is brilliant with the surface brilliance of a well soaped bald head, but there is nothing beneath it.

This mental frivolity expresses itself in many different ways, and of these two, at least, are sufficiently important to demand separate treatment, since they have led critics to include Butler's *jeux d'esprit* among his real convictions. The first is in his love of topsyturvydom, the second in his predilection for bluffing.

TOPSY-TURVY MORALITY

An early and famous cartoon represents Shaw standing on his head and gesticulating with his legs. It would have been apter as a cartoon of Butler. He loves to startle people by disturbing their conventional beliefs, and his favourite way of doing this is to take a conventional belief and turn it inside out.

His experiments in Erewhonian morality are perhaps the best example of this tendency. The Erewhonians turn our moral ideas upside down; they observe the same code as ourselves, but it is inverted and, on each of the two occasions on which Higgs visits them, differently inverted. On his first visit he finds that they regard moral deficiency as an accident, lying entirely outside the control of the individual, demanding sympathy and condolence, and, in certain cases, treatment at the hands of the family straightener, but meriting neither shame nor punishment. Bodily illness on the other hand is regarded with all the feelings of conscientious repugnance which we reserve for moral wrong doing. The person who is taken ill is treated as a criminal, punished not infrequently by death, and driven accordingly to make his illness worse by depriving himself of all those remedies which the necessity of concealing it from his friends and acquaintances places out of his reach.

But illness is only treated in this way because it is a special case of misfortune. All misfortune is culpable; but undeserved misfortune is doubly

so, since the victim, knowing that he has done nothing to merit his sufferings, suffers the more keenly. His suffering makes him doubly disagreeable to his friends; being miserable himself he is a cause of worry to others, while the necessity for sympathy which his misfortune calls forth only makes those the more uncomfortable who feel that they have none to give.

Erewhon contains the account of a trial in which a youth is charged with the misfortune of having been defrauded of his estate. The judge delivers a lengthy speech, in which all the strictures which we pass upon moral guilt are applied to undeserved misfortune. The judge concludes by pointing out that the youth has been either truly or falsely accused. In the first case the charge is a just one and he must suffer accordingly; in the second case he is guilty of the misfortune of being the victim of a false accusation, and must again suffer accordingly. "There are two classes of people in this world," says Butler in *The Way of All Flesh*, "those who sin, and those who are sinned against; if a man must belong to either, he had better belong to the first than to the second."

On Higgs' second visit to Erewhon he finds that these principles have been largely abandoned, and that, as a result of what is understood to have been his teaching on his former visit, wickedness is now encouraged and virtue penalised; this at least is the case in the establishments known as Moral Deformatories, in which instruction in imperfection is given to the young. Higgs finds that the Moral Deformatories teach precisely the

reverse of the precepts instilled in European schools. Youths are here taught consistently to aim at imperfection on the ground that it may well be attainable within a reasonable time, whereas perfection can never be realised. The master rings the bell on a half-holiday in order to provoke the boys to disobey the summons to return to school, as a means of stimulating their refractory systems. Insincerity is encouraged on the ground that the greatest happiness of the greatest number must be promoted, and that most people dislike sincerity in others. Classes are held in gambling and book-making, and boys are caned for telling the truth or saying what they think. On the same visit Higgs is present when a girl is arraigned before the Mayor for being deficient in childish vices. The only fault that her father can find with her is that of occasionally breaking things. The Mayor reproves him for having omitted to punish her for this fault and so providing her with a motive for deception. "How can you," he says, "expect your child to learn those petty arts of deception without which she must fall an easy prey to any one who wishes to deceive her? How can she detect lying in other people unless she has had some experience of it in her own practice?" The importance of teaching children to lie early by punishing them when found out is then impressed on the parent, and George Washington's words, "I cannot tell a lie," interpreted "in their most natural sense, as being his expression of regret at the way in which his education had been neglected."

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It is difficult to believe that Butler means all this very seriously. In *Erewhon Revisited* he takes no trouble to apply his inversion of morality consistently, and frequently forgets all about it, while many of his examples are perilously near the borderline of farce. Butler is simply trying to persuade his readers of his own conviction that morality is relative and not absolute. In his view morality is a biological growth, designed to safeguard the particular stage of advancement that society happens to have reached. Morality changes, and changes rapidly. There is no virtue to-day which has not at some time or other been thought a vice, and there is scarcely any offence for which people are now put in prison that has not been regarded, not only as a virtue, but even as a sacred and religious duty, by some nation of antiquity. In order to illustrate this truth Butler resorts to his favourite device of topsy-turvydom. He wants to show that what we do is no more within our control than what we feel, that there is no real distinction between the animating mind and the animated body, and that, accordingly, it is just as logical to praise and blame people for what they feel in their bodies as for the actions which they falsely believe they initiate, through what they are pleased to call their free wills.

Butler possessed a natural contradictoriness of temperament, which made him more anxious to compel people to think than to tell them what to think. He, therefore, takes a current belief which men have obtained ready made from the

social shop just as they obtain their boots and their clothes, turns it upside down, shows that there is almost if not quite as good a case to be made out for its contrary as for itself, and then leaves the reader to his thoughts.

Partly with this object, partly from sheer devilment, Butler is never so happy as when he is taking a current *cliché*, as often as not a text, and by the alteration of sometimes no more than a word or two, entirely reversing its meaning. The following are a few examples of this process taken at random from his works.

Butler soliloquising on Ernest's mistake in taking the honest girl for the prostitute: "If the better part of valour is discretion, how much more is discretion the better part of vice"; inscription on the Moral Deformatory in *Erewhon Revisited*: "When the righteous man turneth away from the righteousness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is a little naughty and wrong, he will generally be found to have gained in amiability what he has lost in righteousness." — Sunchild Sayings, Chap. XXII., v. 15"; Professor Panky in *Erewhon Revisited* substituting "and forgive us our trespasses, but do not forgive them that trespass against us," for the current version of the Sunchild's prayer, on the ground that nobody would be such an ass as deliberately to insist that the forgiveness of his own sins should be made dependent upon his forgiveness of other people's. "Resist good, and it will fly from you," "Jesus with all thy faults I love thee still," are other sayings of Butler's in the same vein.

The above are jokes pure and simple, jokes which conceal an idea but do not express a conviction. There is no seriousness of intention in their utterance, no sting in their tail, and in this respect they are sharply to be distinguished from the epigrams of Swift or even of Shaw, whose wit is the normal vehicle for the expression of their bitterness and indignation. Only very occasionally are Butler's shafts barbed, as when he says of the farmers who composed Theobald's congregation that "they would have been equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted or seeing it practised."

BUTLER'S BLUFF. THE MACHINES

Butler has a habit of constructing careful and elaborate theories which he does not hold. His object in doing so is conjectural. It may be simply his desire to make people think at any price; it is more probable, however, that these carefully elaborated hypotheses are simply the expressions of his natural mischievousness. They are, in short, gigantic bluffs. The most famous of them is contained in the chapter entitled, "*The Book of the Machines*," in *Erewhon*. This chapter contains extracts from the treatise of an extinct Erewhonian professor, who endeavoured to show that machines represent the next level of evolutionary achievement, and that, just as man had supplanted the Mesozoic reptiles, so would machines supplant man. The following is a brief summary of the Professor's arguments, which are very ingenuous.

Humour and Machines

The first stage of the argument consists in showing that there is no real difference in kind between men and machines. The thesis here falls into two parts. First, machines are alive just as much and just in so far as men are alive; secondly, men are pieces of mechanism just as much and just in so far as machines are pieces of mechanism.

Taking the first point first, we notice that machines have evolved biologically just as men have, growing ever more complex and highly developed in the process. It is true that evolution proceeds by means of the struggle for survival, and that machines cannot struggle; but then they have induced man to do their struggling for them. As long as he fulfils this function all goes well with him, but "the moment he fails to do his best for the advancement of machinery by encouraging the good and destroying the bad, he is left behind in the race of competitors; and this means that he will be made uncomfortable in a variety of ways and perhaps die." In the process of evolution machines have developed digestive and reproductive organs. The early machines, such as ploughs and carts, ate through man's stomach, the fuel which set them going having first to be burnt in the furnace of a man or a horse, whence it was transferred into the energy of the ploughman or carthorse. But whereas animals were formerly the only stomachs of machines, many have now developed stomachs of their own and consume their own food. The stoker is as much a cook for his engine as our own

cooks are for ourselves. Colliers, pitmen, coal merchants, coal trains, and the men who drive them, are all employed in tending the material wants of machines.

As for reproductive systems, it is obvious that machines produce other machines. Man, it is true, causes them to do so ; but do not insects effect the fertilisation of many plants, would not the plants die out unless they could get agents utterly foreign to themselves to do their own fertilisation for them, and is that any reason for saying that plants do not reproduce themselves ? Machines, then, are alive ; their order of life is admittedly different from that of men, but it is not less real on that account.

But if machines are like men in respect of their aliveness, still more are men like machines in respect of their automatism. What is a man after all but the mechanical resultant of a number of different forces ? Some of these forces act upon him before birth and are comprised under the term heredity ; others act upon him after birth under the names of environment and education. A man's nature, therefore, is entirely determined by external agencies ; he is what he is because of the various influences to which he has been subject, and what he does is the direct result of his being what he is. His actions are, in fact, just as much the result of past and present external stimuli, as are those of a machine ; they are as regular and as automatic. Admittedly man believes that he possesses free-will ; but this belief is a delusion, born of his ignorance of the

forces that act upon him. Recognising only some part of these forces, we are led to suppose that the actions for which we can see no antecedent cause are spontaneous, or are due to luck, to chance or to fortune ; but these are only words invented to flatter human conceit, whereby we may escape the admission of our own ignorance. The future depends on the present, the present on the past, and the past is unalterable ; from which it follows that the future is the same both for men and for machines.

Hence there is no essential difference in point of freedom between men and machines. They are, in fact, of like nature, a circumstance which might be expected from the fact that the former have made the latter. Machines are, in short, human extensions ; they are the limbs which man has made outside himself. A hen makes an egg-shell and a nest ; the former she makes inside herself, the latter outside ; but that does not alter the fact that each is biologically speaking an extension of the hen. Similarly, eyes are the organs which man has made within himself to enable him to see ; telescopes and microscopes are extensions of the same organs, which man has found it more convenient to make outside. But if we once begin to regard machines as organisms which we have created outside ourselves for our own use, does not the testimony of evolution require us to suppose that these organisms will gradually supplant those who made them ? Each form of life known to biology, beginning as a development of a lower form, has gradually

superseded that from which it arose. Man himself began in this way, as an unimportant development of the ape, yet gradually made himself master of the planet, consigning his simian ancestors to a position of comparative insignificance. Nor should this surprise us. It is the way in which evolution proceeds; life can make nothing out of nothing; it is only by working on the forms already achieved that it can generate new ones. Each new species represents a higher level of development than the one that preceded it, and, rising to power on the shoulders of its predecessors, continues pre-eminent until it in its turn is superseded.

The next chapter in the history of evolution will be the supersession of men by machines. Even now the machines are gradually acquiring a mastery. Created to serve us, they will only serve on condition of being served, "and that, too, upon their own terms; the moment their terms are not complied with, they jib, and either smash themselves and all whom they can reach, or turn churlish and refuse to work at all. How many men at this hour are living in a state of bondage to the machines? How many spend their whole lives, from the cradle to the grave, in tending them night and day?" Already there are more men engaged in tending machines than in tending men. And, since the number of those who are bound to the machines as slaves and of those who spend their lives in seeking machine advancement is increasing, must we not suppose that the machines are daily gaining ground on us?

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The professor concludes by exhorting the Erewhonians to destroy the machines while there is still time, which advice, after long and disastrous wars between the machinists and the anti-machinists, they carry out so thoroughly that not a machine is left in the land.

I have given at some length the theories of the Erewhonian professor with regard to the dominance of machines, not only because of the intrinsic interest of the argument, which is highly ingenious and very characteristic of Butler, but also because it conveys in a very significant way his premonition of what was to come.

This is not the place for a dissertation on the growing mechanisation of civilisation, and the sacrifice of spiritual values to mechanical efficiency. It is, indeed, needless to point out how accurately Butler seems to have foreseen the admitted evils of our age. America and all it stands for, big business and large scale production, the cult of efficiency for its own sake and the tendency to value achievement in terms of material success, above all the growing complexity of life with the consequent loss of leisure and tranquility, are all of them phenomena which arise directly from the increasing part played by machinery in human existence. In delegating to machines an ever larger share of human functions, man has increasingly cut himself off from those sources of instinctive happiness which are bound up with the performance of natural actions. Living in towns and conveyed hither and thither in tubes, he has banished himself

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from Nature and condemned himself to spiritual wretchedness for want of her ; reduced from the status of a craftsman to the rôle of a merè feeder and tender of machines, he has robbed his work of joy and choked the natural expression of his creative impulse.

Nor is Butler's attribution of intelligence to machines so fantastic as it might seem at first sight ; at least, subsequent developments have made it less so. A typewriter capable of writing, and of translating as it writes into Irish, Gaelic, Russian, Greek or Persian, capable also of transcribing the higher mathematics, is one of the mechanical monsters of our age. Beside the efficiency of such a marvel, our poor human acquirements, so painfully won, so quickly lost and so liable to go astray, seem such a clumsy and makeshift device that one is tempted to wonder how it is that Nature delays so long to make her next evolutionary move, and supersede us entirely by machines. Meanwhile, however, we become increasingly subordinated to and dependent upon them. We cannot live without them, and we devote most of our lives to making theirs more tolerable. Nobody who has read Karel Capek's play *R.U.R.*, and grasped its searching criticism of the mechanism of our times, will be disposed to laugh Butler's *Book of the Machines* too lightly out of court. Treat it as allegory or as prophecy, and it stands out as one of the most remarkable pieces of insight of the last century.

But for all this it would be a mistake to place

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too serious an interpretation on the *Book of the Machines*. From most points of view it is little more than a piece of mischief on a large scale, written to amuse Butler and to startle his readers. It contains, for example, several doctrines which are the exact antithesis of his most profoundly held convictions. Machines, like men, evolve in the course of the struggle for survival; the weaker go to the wall and are superseded by those who are fitter to survive. What is this but sheer Darwinism? Butler did not believe that the struggle for survival was the cause of evolution. Why survival, he would have asked? What is the point of surviving unless one survives for a definite end, and in pursuance of a definite purpose? The survival of the fittest, if it means anything, means the survival of those who are fit only to survive. It is an expression of that mechanistic view of evolution to which Butler was so violently opposed.

And what of the doctrine of thorough-going determinism which is invoked to prove man's likeness to machines? Is it not attacked root and branch in all Butler's books on biology? He did not hold that man is a product of antecedent circumstances, and that his actions are the mechanical resultants of conflicting forces. On the contrary, he contended for man's innate creativeness, regarding him as the expression of an immanent vital principle, which moulds and directs what is material in the pursuit of a goal for which it unconsciously strives. Man for Butler is free just because perpetual change is

the very essence of his being ; he can make his own future just because there is no future until life, acting in and through man, brings it into being.

There is a passage in *Unconscious Memory* in which Butler comments upon the *Book of the Machines*, and tells us how he came to write it. Although for the most part it expresses views which he had never held, or had long abandoned, it prepares the way for his own distinctive standpoint. From regarding machines as limbs which we had made outside ourselves, it was but a step to the conception of limbs as machines which we had made within ourselves. But the assertion of man's ability to make for himself in his own organism whatever he finds useful for the purposes of evolution, is the essence of the doctrine of Creative Evolution. Man is what he is, and has evolved as he has because he has wanted to in the past, just as his desire in the present provides the motive power for further evolutionary advances in the future.

This, as we have said, is Butler's real view. For the rest the *Book of the Machines* was written, as Butler himself admits, mainly for the purposes of amusement. "I soon felt that though there was plenty of amusement to be got out of this line, it was one that I should have to leave sooner or later."

Still it was certainly amusing, even though Butler did not believe a word of it. Why not, then, run it for fifty pages or so, and make the professors sit up ?

SUMMARY

I PROPOSE to conclude the foregoing sketch of Butler's thought by a brief summary of what, in the light of his influence on his contemporaries, may be regarded as its most important and distinctive features, and to indicate the way in which they were developed by his successors.

They may, I think, be summed up as follows :—

(1) Butler was one of the first to question the implications of Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest. These implications amounted to the complete elimination of mind from the Universe, which came inevitably to be regarded as a piece of mechanism functioning by chance.

Butler reintroduced the idea of purpose, and sought to show that the conception of a mindless Universe failed to account for the facts either of biology or of psychology.

(2) As an alternative to Darwin's view, Butler propounded the theory of creative evolution.

According to this theory evolution is the expression of a purposive, all pervasive world force, which may be described simply as "life." It is the nature of "life" to change and to evolve and, in the course of its evolution, it directs and moulds matter in the interests of the purpose that it unconsciously has in view. It follows

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that we evolve because we want to do so, and for no other reason.

The chief features of the theory are :

(a) The inheritance of acquired characteristics.

(b) Personal identity between parents and offspring.

(c) Unconscious memory on the part of the offspring of what it did in the person of its parents.

(d) The identification of this unconscious memory with habit.

(e) The ability of mind to determine, control and ultimately create matter, as opposed to the current conception of matter as that which determined and produced mind.

(f) The ultimate interpretation of all matter in terms of life, coupled with a refusal to admit the existence of any type of entity which is not in some degree living.

(3) This theory has been developed (a) by Bergson, (b) by Bernard Shaw.

(a) In *Creative Evolution* Bergson emphasises more particularly the importance and sole reality of change, and works out in detail the reduction of all forms of so-called matter to different aspects of the process of change. He also follows Butler in the importance which the latter attributes to instinct, and in his distrust of the logical intellect as an instrument for the apprehension of truth.

(b) Shaw in *Back to Methuselah* has emphasised the purposiveness of the creative force which is life, interpreting it as the urge to express itself in ever higher forms of consciousness, and to

achieve an ever greater degree of emancipation from matter. He has also developed Butler's more specifically biological views, and endeavoured to demonstrate the validity of his theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics in the light of later research.

Partly as a result of the work of these writers, the prevailing tendency of thought to-day is vitalistic, whereas when Butler wrote it was mechanistic. Butler played a considerable part in initiating this change of outlook.

(4) Whereas the Victorians glorified reason and put their faith instinctively in rationalism, Butler belittled reason and insisted on the importance of possessing right instincts.

In abstract thought reason demands absolute truth ; but nothing is true without exception. Hence all philosophies are false. In practical life reason demands consistency and leads to extremes ; but successful living embraces inconsistency and adheres to means. People who are happy and successful do the right thing instinctively ; they do not use their reason to inform themselves that it is right and then conclude that it is their duty to do it. In practical matters, therefore, instinct is a safer guide than reason, and the attempt to conduct existence according to the dictates of reason leads to absurdity and disaster.

Hence it is best not to be very clever.

(5) The right thing means the thing that tends to promote happiness, and happiness means primarily the happiness of the self. Since, how-

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ever, this may be promoted in a number of different ways, and is, moreover, a variable and elusive state, there are no absolute rules for its achievement. It follows that there is no such thing as absolute morality, morality being meaningless apart from its results.

The attempt to live virtuously, to be unselfish and to do one's duty according to the Victorian interpretation of these words, does not normally lead to happiness.

Hence it is best not to be very moral.

(6) The views summarised in (4) and (5) have, in one form or another, become very popular since Butler's time.

The distrust of reason, the rejection of absolute truth, and the claim that beliefs must be judged by the results of their adoption are the cardinal points in the doctrine of Pragmatism.

The insistence on the importance of instinct and impulse in conduct is a feature which most modern schools of psychology, however much they may differ in other respects, possess in common. W. H. Rivers, in his book *Instinct and the Unconscious*, regards instinct, both in its origin and in its function, from the same standpoint as Butler, and the less sensational aspects of psycho-analysis have only made explicit the implications of Butler's doctrine that faith and not reason (in psycho-analytic language, the unconscious and not the conscious) is the guide to success in life, and that reason will only suppress faith at its peril.

As regards morality, many of Butler's most

suggestive ideas, as for instance, his insistence upon the primary duty of securing happiness, the dependence of morality upon happiness, and the attainment of happiness through the liberation of instinct, have been developed and worked into a coherent philosophy by Bertrand Russell.

(7) Finally, Butler aimed at the emancipation of mankind from its thralldom to professional persons, armed with the authority of rules and brandishing the weapon of expert knowledge.

Doctors, priests, professors, lawyers, schoolmasters and parents are all chastised in turn by Butler's wit. The Victorian age was an age that worshipped authority and teemed with authorities, and each special branch of knowledge was a vested interest in the hands of close corporations of persons formed to exploit it. To-day we are impatient of authority, distrustful of diplomas, and apt to remain unimpressed by the number of letters attached to the terminals of a man's name.

The movement which this change represents was begun by Butler, carried on and developed by Shaw, and finally culminated in the general irreverence of the twentieth century as opposed to the solemnity of the nineteenth. It receives its chief expression, however, in the modern attitude to parents, and the refusal to regard family life as necessarily and inevitably an approximation to the conditions which may be supposed to prevail in heaven. And here again Butler's *Way of All Flesh* is clearly the culprit.

PRINCIPAL DATES

THE following table gives the most important dates in Butler's life and the dates of the chief contemporary related events in juxtaposition :—

<i>Chief Events of Butler's Life.</i>	<i>Contemporary Events.</i>
Born, 1835.	
School at Shrewsbury, 1848–1854.	
St. John's, Cambridge, 1854–1858.	
Goes to New Zealand, 1859.	Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> published 1859.
<i>Darwin among the Machines</i> , 1863.	
Returns to England, 1864.	
<i>Erewhon</i> , published 1872.	Wallace, Alfred Russel, <i>Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection</i> , 1871.
<i>Way of All Flesh</i> , begun 1873.	
<i>Life and Habit</i> , published 1877.	
<i>Evolution Old and New</i> , published 1879.	
<i>Unconscious Memory</i> , published 1880.	
<i>Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino</i> , published 1881.	Shaw's first novel published 1886.
<i>Luck or Cunning</i> , published 1887.	
<i>Ex Voto</i> , published 1888.	Wallace, Alfred Russel, <i>Darwinism</i> , 1889.
	Weisman, August, <i>The Germ Plasm</i> , 1893.
	Bergson, <i>Matter and Memory</i> , 1896.

Principal Dates

Chief Events of Butler's Life.

The Authoress of the Odyssey,
published 1897.

Erewhon Revisited, published
1901.

Death, 1902.

Way of All Flesh, published
1903.

Contemporary Events.

Weisman, August, *The Evolution Theory*, 1902.

William James, *Pragmatism*,
1907.

Bergson, *Creative Evolution*,
1907.

H. De Vries, *The Mutation Theory* (Trans.), 1910-1911.

Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*,
1921.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED

THE following is a list of Butler's biological works :

Life and Habit, published in 1877.

Evolution Old and New, published in 1879.

Unconscious Memory, published in 1880.

Luck or Cunning, published in 1887.

Three essays entitled "The Deadlock in Darwinism," published in the *Universal Review*, April-June, 1890; republished in *Essays on Life, Art and Science*, 1904, and again in *The Humour of Homer*, 1913.

An excellent introduction to Butler's biological writings has been contributed by Professor Marcus Hartog to the 1910 edition of *Unconscious Memory*.

The most important of Butler's other books are :—

FICTION

Erewhon, published in 1872.

Erewhon Revisited, published in 1901.

The Way of All Flesh, published in 1903.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Authoress of the Odyssey, published in 1897.

Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino, published in 1881.

The Notebooks, published in 1912.

Mr. Festing Jones' book, *Samuel Butler* (1919, published by Macmillan) is, of course, the authoritative work on Butler, and those who desire to supplement this brief sketch should refer to it.

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